セブンス 6th

6

illustration
ともぞ

Yomu Mishima
三嶋与夢

ヒーロー文庫

Table of Contents

Prologue

Chapter 67 – The Two Walt Houses

Chapter 68 – Preparation

Chapter 69 – Hippogriff Subjugation Force

Chapter 70 – Past

Chapter 71 – The Worst Man

Chapter 72 – Contract

Chapter 73 – Defensive Battle

Chapter 74 – The Respective Battlefield

Chapter 75 – Griffon

Chapter 76 – Regret

Chapter 77 – Farewell

Epilogue

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「もっと、私が強ければ――」
アリアが呟く。
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「俺について来れば、
お前らにもいい目を
見させてやる」

「金も女も手に入れた。
残るは名誉と地位だ」

〝舞台〟に上がってくるのは、扇情的な衣装に身を包んだ
エヴァさんとミランダさんである。
露出が多く、ハッキリ言えば刺激が強すぎる格好をしている。
上がってきた二人を両脇に立たせ、肩を抱いて引き寄せる。

「せ、先生。ツンデレとはなんですか？」
ツンデレ
モニカは呆れた顔をして答えた。

ノウェムはそのおとぎ話について語る。
そうだったのか、と
シャノンも頷いていた。

『グリフォンか。
これでライエルも一人前だな』

『良いよね、
グリフォン！』

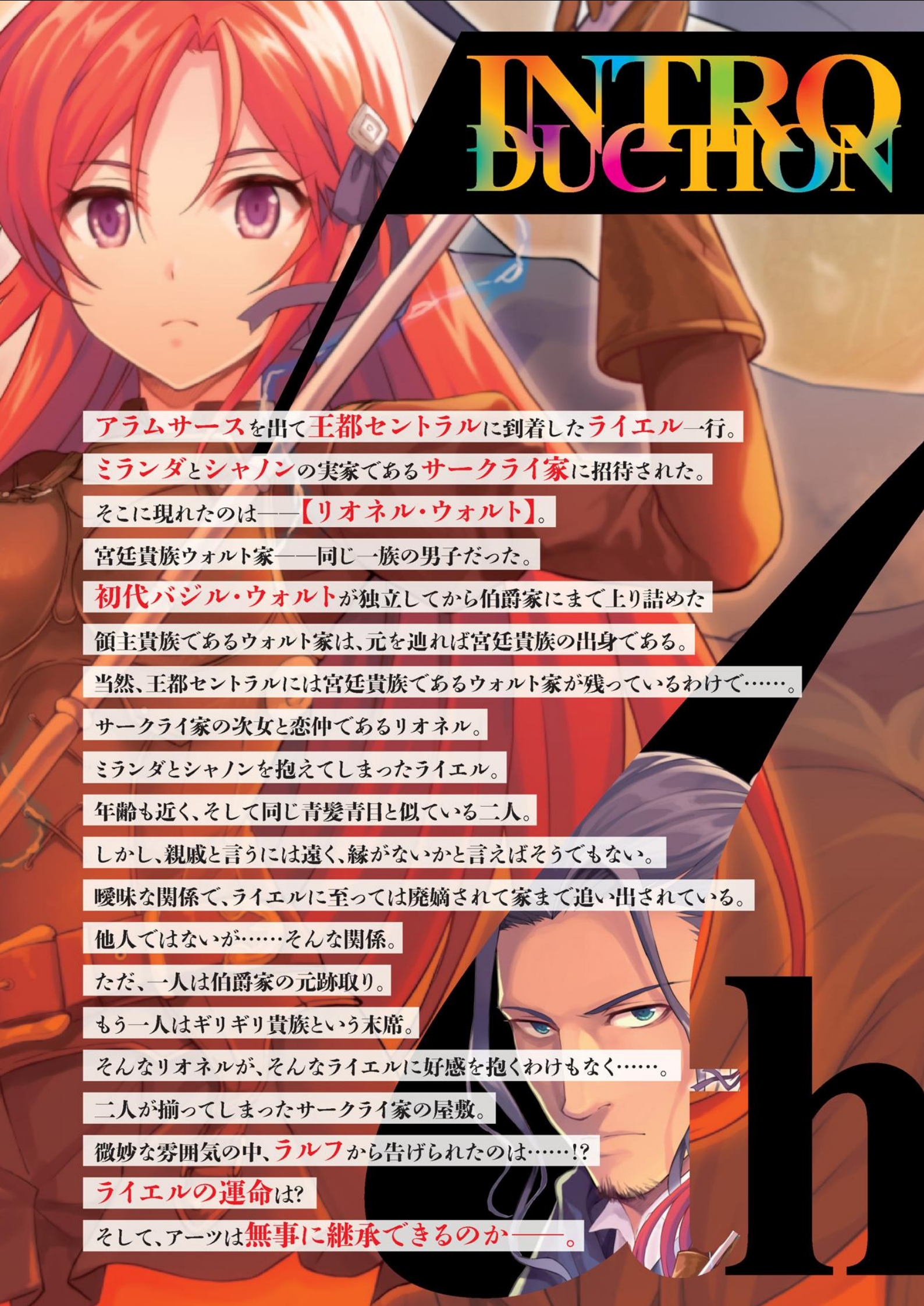
『素材も魔石も
手に入れたいところです。
アレは結構な
お金になりますよ』

『剥製です。
剥製にしましょう。
ライエルの倒した
グリフォンは剥製にして
飾りましょう！』

『やはり男として
グリフォン退治は外せませんな！
ライエル、良かったな！』

『俺はチャンスが
少なくて二体しか
仕留められなかったな』

――歴代当主たちのノリが酷い。



INTRODUCTION

アラムサースを出て王都セントラルに到着したライエル一行。

ミランダとシャノンの実家であるサークライ家に招待された。

そこに現れたのは――【リオネル・ウォルト】。

宮廷貴族ウォルト家――同じ一族の男子だった。

初代バジル・ウォルトが独立してから伯爵家にまで上り詰めた

領主貴族であるウォルト家は、元を辿れば宮廷貴族の出身である。

当然、王都セントラルには宮廷貴族であるウォルト家が残っているわけで……。

サークライ家の次女と恋仲であるリオネル。

ミランダとシャノンを抱えてしまったライエル。

年齢も近く、そして同じ青髪青目と似ている二人。

しかし、親戚と言うには遠く、縁がないかと言えばそうでもない。

曖昧な関係で、ライエルに至っては廃嫡されて家まで追い出されている。

他人ではないが……そんな関係。

ただ、一人は伯爵家の元跡取り。

もう一人はギリギリ貴族という末席。

そんなリオネルが、そんなライエルに好感を抱くわけもなく……。

二人が揃ってしまったサークライ家の屋敷。

微妙な雰囲気の中、ラルフから告げられたのは……!?

ライエルの運命は?

そして、アーツは無事に継承できるのか――。

歴代当主アーツ紹介 —— 004
プロローグ —— 007
第六十七話 二つのウォルト家 —— 033
第六十八話 準備 —— 059
第六十九話 ヒポグリフ討伐隊 —— 088
第七十話 過去 —— 115
第七十一話 最低な男 —— 147
第七十二話 契約 —— 176
第七十三話 防衛戦 —— 204
第七十四話 それぞれの戦場 —— 232
第七十五話 グリフォン —— 263
第七十六話 後悔 —— 285
第七十七話 お別れ —— 314
エピローグ —— 346

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CONTENTS

Prologue

An encounter was something sudden.

Inside the blue Jewel hanging on my neck, its previous owners—my ancestors' memories were resurrected together with their Arts and talked to me.

Normally the ancestors were reliable existences who taught me their Arts that had wonderful abilities.

However.

They had their own sense of value from the time they lived in.

That was why, they insulted me as unreliable because I was ignorant of the ways of the world, scolded me, and laughed at me.

There were seven of such ancestors.

If the beginning of my journey after I was driven out from my house because I lost against my little sister was the worst, then my encounter with the ancestors had to be said as the worst too.

At first I thought of the blue Jewel heirloom as a cursed necklace.

My mana was absorbed if the ancestors made a ruckus.

Before I went through my Growth, my mana would immediately run low which caused me to collapse and caused trouble for the people around me.

Why were they burdening me?

Why wouldn't they stay quiet?

Why were they so annoying……frankly speaking I was thinking of them as a bother.

But, sometimes they were also reliable. The ancestors taught me various things.

There were also several facts that were only known by them.

The family precepts for taking a wife that had been followed by my family—the Walt House for generations were actually just a lie that the First told. Right now I could only laugh at that.

The ancestor who was known as a hero was actually someone that was very different from his image that was told in history. He didn't do what he did because he wanted to. It was surprising to hear that.

The person who was praised as someone extremely skilled in domestic affairs was actually someone who loved money with a petty hobby of saving up money.

There was also a person who I thought loved to play with woman because I heard that he was married many women, and yet he was a person who didn't look like a playboy at all.

And then the person who expanded the family's territory the most was actually a hen-pecked husband. I doubted my ears when I heard that.

I was also able to listen to the past stories and hardships of my grandfather who was doting towards his grandchild.

They were completely different from the stories that I heard about them. They were humans in all respects.

Those ancestors, they were resurrected as memories inside the Jewel. There was a reason for that.

It was in order to bequeath the ability that they manifested and polished to the limit—their Art to me.

The ancestors existed for that sake. They would vanish when they finished their role.

Certainly, that might be proper considering the Jewel's function.

Even though it was right for the Jewel, but for me…….

.

Our group left the academy city Arumsaas and headed towards the royal capital Centralle.

Even if we were going to another region after this, it would be convenient to head to Centralle first.

As to be expected from the royal capital, the roads to other regions were concentrated there.

Goods from various regions were gathered at the capital, and information too.

In order to decide where would be a good place to head to after this, and then in order to gather various other information too, that place would be convenient.

And above all else, the house of the Circry sisters who joined us in Arumsaas was located in Centralle.

The reply of the letter that Miranda-san sent to her house told her to show her face once there.

It was necessary to go to the Circry House's mansion.

[I wonder why? This is like going to meet the parents to say "Please give your daughter to me!".]

The Third’s easygoing voice came into hearing.

Inside the Jewel, in the room of the round table.

It was the place where all the ancestors were present when I moved my consciousness to inside the Jewel.

There was a large blue jewel at the ceiling. There were small gems positioned in radiating shape with that large jewel as the center.

The number was 24.

Among them, eleven jewels were shining.

It told me how many Arts I had learned.

There were chairs around the round table. Each ancestor was sitting there.

There were doors behind them.

The doors were connected to the ancestors’ memory. By entering the room, their strong memories would be replayed.

There was also a chair for me to sit.

However, there was no door behind me.

The Seventh was laughing. It seemed he was enjoying this situation.

[Well, that’s not actually wrong after all. From the perspective of the Circry House’s head, he must want to see the face of Lyle who stole his daughter. A capital noble rat dares to act high and mighty like this.]

From how he spoke of his dissatisfaction towards the capital nobles at the end, although he was the previous head, he was still human.

Certainly the ancestors were outstanding people, but as humans they had good parts and bad parts.

The Sixth laughed heartily.

[Lyle, you should just provoke him instead. Tell him, Miranda has chosen me.]

The Fifth was showing cautiousness.

[Why are you picking a fight like that? I think it's better to watch the situation first if you don't understand what the other side's intention is. After all you're dealing with capital nobles who you can't let your guard down against.]

The ancestors were feudal lord nobles.

There were largely two kinds of nobles in the Bahnseim Kingdom, feudal lord nobles who possessed their own territory, and the capital nobles who were living in the royal capital as the king's direct followers and received wages from the kingdom.

The feudal lord nobles were approved by the king to own territory, as the compensation they swore fealty to the king.

In contrast, the capital nobles were given wages—annuity from the kingdom and lived in the capital.

It would be wrong to call the two kinds of nobles to have the same sense of values.

The Fourth nodded while looking strangely annoyed.

[Yes, I understand. I really understand. You can't let your guard down against those bunches. When they're troubled they will approach with a humble act, but when their business is over they'll

be back to act condescendingly. Those bunches are fundamentally making light of us.]

From his words I could guess that he didn’t really have any good memories about the capital nobles.

The Second was also the same.

[I was also greatly troubled by them in my time. At that time we were a small feudal lord, but there was our main house in Centralle.]

Main house.

That was the house that the First, Basil Walt was born from.

He was the youngest son of a capital noble. The main house of the Walt House was a house that was only barely allowed to pass down its title. However, the feudal lord Walt House that was treated as a branch house became too big. Because of that the association between the two houses was also gone.

Because there were also interaction between the two houses in the era of the Second, he seemed to get a headache when he recalled that time.

He pressed his forehead with his hand.

[They were annoying, asking to send them money, asking to send them soldiers. The old man became independent mostly by his own effort but, the ties couldn’t be severed that easily so it was a pain.]

I tilted my head.

"Was the relationship really that bad?"

The Second answered with a powerless grin.

[I believe that I had it the worst in my era but……what about you all? I heard that the ties were severed though?]

When he brought up the subject towards the other ancestors, the Third answered.

[There was a lot of war in my era so we had no leeway to get involved with them.]

The Fourth also nodded.

[It was the same in my era too. They approached us several times but that was all.]

The Seventh concluded the talk.

[Our house also stood in superior position whether in scale or status, so there wasn't any benefit to get along with that house. Besides, it might be a different story if we were indebted to them, but for us they were nothing but unpleasant so we severed ties. We were the same house if we traced back to the beginning, but it gave me the creeps that they acted like the main house.]

It was a one-sided relationship, so the relationship was weakening along with the passage of time.

The Sixth returned back to the topic.

[We wouldn't get involved with them anymore but, fate is a strange thing. Lyle, even if they come to you it'll be better to not get involved with them. Now then, let's return back to the topic—Second.]

Everyone's gaze was gathered to the Second. It made him felt strangely embarrassed.

The Second, Crassel Walt was the one with the thinnest presence among the current members.

His sharp gaze and hunter appearance were peculiar, but the Walt House was a small feudal lord in the Second's Era.

The diligent Second was an inconspicuous existence within the history of the Walt House.

The First who set out to open up a new land was a character with a great reputation of valor, while the Second's son, the Third was counted as one of the heroes of Bahnseim.

The Second who was put in between those two was frankly too plain.

The person himself seemed to understand that too.

[Well, what. I'm just thinking that I should teach Lyle my Art any time now.]

When the Second brought that up, my chest felt strangely painful.

What was this pain?

"Eh? But, the Second's Art is—"

I had learned the Second's Art until the second stage.

Only the third stage remained. It was the last one.

[I've consulted with the others too but, this is as far as I go. Besides, if it's the current Lyle then you'll be able to learn my Art easily.]

The Second made a face that was already resolved to bid farewell.

[It's fine. Even without me here you have these guys. Besides, there's……already nothing that I can teach you. Lyle, you've already

grown splendidly. You’re still unreliable sometimes but, it’s a world of difference compared to when we first met. You’re already alright.]

The Second’s smile looked somewhat sad, but he was making an atmosphere that couldn’t be declined.

"I, I should learn other Arts first."

My gaze wandered around. But the Second shook his head seeing me trying to postpone learning his Art.

[No, learn my Art first. It’s better that way. Besides it will be useful from here on.]

The Second’s Art reflected the owner’s personality. It was really plain.

It let other people to use the Art. That was all.

However, its secondary effect was great. I was helped by it many times until now.

[You’ll become strong from here on. It’ll make me happy if my Art can become of help for that. Come on, let’s go. Momentum is important for things like this.]

I headed to the Second’s memory room just as he told me.

My chest—felt strangely painful.

.

Inside Porter that was heading to Centralle.

I slowly opened my eyes.

Novem called out to me who was waking up.

"Lyle-sama, you’re awake? You seem to be really tired."

I felt relieved seeing Novem’s worried look.

"Yeah, I might be a bit tired."

Inside the armored vehicle—Porter that was running on the road was spacious. When I looked around there was Sophia-san sleeping.

Poyopoyo whose name was Monica now was knitting something enthusiastically.

But, her work speed was abnormal.

She stopped her hands and looked my way.

"Oh, you’re awake chicken dickwad. It can’t be helped. This Monica will start taking care chicken dickwad—"

"No need."

I only woke up from my sleep, so it was troubling even if she told me that she would take care of me.

When I bluntly refused like that, Monica’s shoulders dropped in sadness and she returned to her knitting. Seeing that made me feel like my guilt was stirred.

"……I, see. Please call me if you need something. This Monica. “This Monica” who is formerly Poyopoyo! Will take care of chicken dickwad."

It seemed she was happy that the name she was previously dissatisfied with was changed. Monica spoke her new name several times.

When I thought that she was that dissatisfied with the previous name, it made me want to change her name back to Poyopoyo again instead.

I wondered what the other members were doing and ran my gaze inside the vehicle.

I heard voices from the opened hatch at the ceiling. The voices belonged to Shannon and Aria-san who climbed on the roof.

"I’m bored. I’m already fed up with traveling!"

"Endure it. Besides, originally it would take a much longer time than this."

"No way. I want to take a bath!"

"Don’t speak selfishly! We got hot water prepared at night so it’s still better."

"I want to soak in a bathtub. It’s cold so I want to sleep on a bed."

"……You really have a hell of a personality huh. Normally no one will ask that much while traveling."

Aria-san’s voice sounded exasperated towards Shannon’s selfish voice.

The two of them were also acting as lookout.

In that case, Miranda-san who wasn’t here might be at the driver’s seat together with Clara-san.

I lifted my upper body inside the armored vehicle that had few shaking and sat down.

Novem poured tea from a canteen and handed it to me.

"Lyle-sama, here."

"Thank you."

The steam rising from the cup……it was still better inside the vehicle but, the outside was surely cold. The season was already turning into winter.

Novem stared at my face.

"What is it?"

"No, somehow……Lyle-sama, did something nice happen?"

I laughed slightly at those words from Novem.

"……I wonder?"

I said that and brought the tea to my mouth, then a voice came from inside the Jewel.

—It was the Second's voice.

[……Oi, just what the hell with this!]

The Fourth soothed him down.

[Now, that's……the Second too, let's calm down.]

The Second raised his voice.

Yes, the Second hadn't disappeared yet.

[This is strange! Why is it a failure!? What's more, the atmosphere before was in preparation of me vanishing! This is a bit embarrassing like this!]

The Second spoke various things thinking that he would vanish.

Everyone was looking sympathetic, except the Third who was laughing.

[You said something like, 'you're already alright' in farewell and yet you returned back here. As expected it was surprising.]

[Don’t laugh! I hate that kind of side of yours!]

Certainly……the Second who returned from the memory room with me looked really embarrassed.

The other ancestors were also dumbfounded, and then the room of the round table was wrapped in a complicated atmosphere.

[Lyle, this is your responsibility! Or rather, why are you unable to inherit the Art! My Art isn’t that difficult I’m telling you!]

No, it was difficult enough.

Surely my strength was still insufficient to learn it.

Seeing me drinking the tea slowly, Novem smiled happily for some reason.

"Lyle-sama, were you able to see a good dream?"

I nodded slightly.

"That might be so."

In the first place, it was the fault of the ancestors who decided on their own that I would be able to learn the Art easily.

If you said that—wouldn’t it make it look like I was intentionally failing at it?

A voice came from the roof.

"Oh! I can see it!"

It was Shannon’s cheerful voice. Aria-san showed her face from the hatch and peeked inside the vehicle.

Her long hair was dangling down from her head that was upside down.

I guess it would be better not to say that she looked slightly scary like that.

"Oo~i, we can see Centralle now. Oh, Lyle, you woke up?"

After I nodded, Aria-san called st Sophia-san.

"Sophia, wake up already. We already arrived."

Sophia-san who was wrapped in a blanket rubbed her eyes and woke up.

"We arrived? It’s really fast."

Sophia-san held back her yawn. When I turned my gaze from her to Aria-san, she wasn’t there anymore.

I handed the cup to Novem and brought out my face from the ceiling’s hatch.

As I thought, the outside was cold.

My body shivered, but I brought my upper body until outside and stared at the scenery.

Far away, I could see Centralle that was protected by a large wall.

"We finally arrived."

Inside the Jewel, I could hear the voice of the Second that was still being angry from feeling embarrassed and irritated towards me.

It was annoying just a little while ago but……right now I felt that this noisiness was normal.

Yes, this was my daily life.

[Lyle, listen to what I’m saying!]

Centralle’s gate.

I stored Porter using the Seventh’s Art, Box and carried only the necessary items before finishing the procedure and passed through the gate.

The scenery of Bahnseim’s largest city spread out before us.

I had visited this city several times, but the scale of this city’s size gave me a completely different impression from Arumsaas.

The unique Arumsaas was also impactful, but Centralle had a lot of surprising things even after visiting other regions.

We arrived in the afternoon.

The time was still too early to settle down, but there was also the fatigue from the trip so we searched for an inn.

This was Clara-san’s first time leaving Arumsaas for a genuine travel. She was looking around frequently.

"As expected it’s different from Arumsaas. There are a lot of people."

Miranda-san who was born in Centralle explained with a smile.

"Right. Well, people will gather here even without doing anything so this city is big at any rate."

Because there were monsters roaming around, if the scale of the city grew bigger, it would become necessary to think about making a wall for defense.

Centralle that was protected by a tall and thick wall also had vast plots of land behind the wall.

However because the number of people living here increased throughout many years, the inside of the wall felt strangely cramped.

One reason for that was because the buildings were crowded together in a confined space, but more than that was the number of people that was just a lot.

Aria-san was also born here, so she was knowledgeable about Centralle.

"This place has a lot of people and dirty though. The river for example is really terrible. I only noticed after traveling around but, the river in a place with few people is clean. It surprised me."

Thanks to the people and horse carriages coming and going at the gates nearby, the dust was horrible and it was just smelly.

While we were talking and moving quickly to search for an inn, suddenly I felt a gaze looking at us.

Rather than looking at me, the gaze seemed to be looking at Miranda-san and Shannon.

I raised my guard while walking to look for an inn.

Before long the watcher confirmed us entering an inn and then left.

I couldn’t feel any hostility but, it weighed on my mind.

.

A few hours after entering the inn.

Everyone entered the bath in order to remove their fatigue from the journey. As soon as they finished with that they laid down to rest. The setting of the sun was also quick, the outside was starting to turn dark.

At such timing, the owner of the inn called, saying a guest came.

The first floor of the inn was used as a lobby.

Each time people came and went, the cold air flowed in and lowered the room’s temperature.

There was indoor heating, but when the air started to get a little warmer, someone would open the door and lowered the temperature again.

Because of that, there weren’t many people that stayed in the lobby.

People would quickly move to go outside or returned to their room.

When I went down the stairs, I could see Miranda-san dealing with the guest.

The guest who seemed to be her acquaintance was a man with white hair who looked like an old gentleman. He was wearing a suit with his hand holding a coat and a hat. His other hand was holding a cane, but he didn’t look like an elderly who needed it to help him walk.

His back was straight and even from above his clothes it was obvious that he was someone trained.

He was talking to Miranda-san and Shannon.

"Long time no see Miranda-ojousama, Shannon-ojousama. Even so, Miranda-ojousama is getting more and more similar with your great grandmother."

From the way he spoke, he must be a servant working for thr Circry House. The way Miranda-san interacted with him was also the way someone would deal with a servant.

"It has been a long time since you retired but you seem to be doing well."

"I handed over my work to my son and lived in retirement, but due to master's request I came to greet the two of you like this."

Miranda-san made a troubled expression.

"……Should I say that it's just like Otou-sama to do that. It's pointless even if I complain to you, let's hear what you have to say."

The Seventh's voice came from the Jewel.

[……Could it be, he is the brat who was at aunt's place? He has grown a lot……or rather, he is old.]

He seemed to be someone that the Seventh knew.

The elderly who knew of the great grandmother of Miranda-san and Shannon noticed me coming down and turned his body towards me and greeted.

It seemed he knew my face.

"You must be Lyle Walt-dono. I am Renard who previously worked as a butler for the Circry House. Today I came here because my master entrusted me with a message."

His smile didn't have any hostility, but I felt something from him that made me strangely unable to be careless towards him.

The Fifth talked to me.

[Butler, huh. This guy seems to be really skilled.]

The Seventh was laughing.

[I knew him as a little brat. I remembered him looking nervous behind aunt. It’s surprising that brat became a butler.]

The Seventh was feeling nostalgic seeing someone he knew, but the Fifth seemed to have his guard up.

He might have judged that this was a person that he couldn’t let his guard down against.

When I approached, Miranda-san shrugged and smiled awkwardly.

"He took care of me when I was a child. I don’t know if Shannon remembers him though."

"……I’m sorry. I don’t remember."

Shannon was hiding behind Miranda-san’s back. It seemed she was scared seeing Renard-san. Shannon didn’t have any memory of him must be because she was too young at that time.

Renard-san seemed to remember Shannon.

"Oh, Shannon-ojousama……could it be you’re able to see?"

Shannon was driven out from the Circry House because she was blind.

If he was a former butler then naturally he must know about that circumstance.

Miranda-san nodded.

"Yes, she was cured in Arumsaas."

It wasn’t a lie, but it seemed she had no intention to tell everything. In the first place we didn’t understand how her eyes became able to see so there was no way to explain.

Renard-san smiled.

"That’s great. Master, too, is going to be happy."

I felt no ill will from his expression, but I also couldn’t think of it as his true feeling.

Miranda-san denied that with a few words.

"That’s a lie. Otou-sama won’t be happy. More importantly Renard, the message?"

"The way you talk is also exactly the same."

Renard-san seemed to be happy hearing Miranda-san’s reply.

"……You’re really similar to your great grandmother. Your appearance and also your personality are exactly like her."

"I’ll consider that as a praise."

Renard-san was satisfied by Miranda-san’s response. Then he looked at me with a straight face.

His expression was really serious.

"Lyle-dono, master—my employer, the head of the Circry House, Ralph Circry-sama sent a message. He said to turn up at the mansion with his daughter in tow."

The Seventh was irritated hearing those words.

Even though he seemed to be congenial until just now, he suddenly began to get irritated.

[He is summoning Lyle? This brat……and then the brat who is the family head is also getting carried away. Just who do they think they’re dealing with here huh!]

Within the Seventh he must still br thinking of me as a heir of a Count house.

But, right now I was nothing more than an adventurer.

The Third spoke in exasperation.

[Well, in this case it can’t be helped that he is summoned. Because, Lyle doesn’t have any peerage or strength that would make a noble to be wary against him. In the first place he’s going to go there because he is summoned isn’t it? There is no use getting angry about it.]

The Seventh couldn’t say anything back and felt vexed. I was listening to that while answering.

"I will come. How about tomorrow?"

Renard-san nodded.

"Yes. It will be 3 P.M tomorrow. Well then, excuse me."

Renard-san only said that and left after giving a bow. Several people who were waiting outside the inn left with him.

"So the people observing us were them."

Miranda-san reacted to my muttering.

"You noticed? Well, my family is that kind of house. That Renard too, he was making that kind of face but it seems that he was amazing when he was on active duty. That talk about retirement is a lie. He might be training the next generation I guess?"

From how they were tailing and observing us, they seemed to be really skillful.

The Circry House couldn’t be underestimated seeing how they employed servants who were used to rough matters.

While I was thinking that, with a smile Miranda-san—

"By the way, the one who first taught those people who are used to rough matters was my great grandmother—a person from the Walt House who married into our house."

"……Eh?"

I reflexively stared fixedly at Miranda-san’s face. I couldn’t believe it.

The inside of the Jewel was the same. The Fifth was flustered.

[That’s a lie right?]

The one who was the most shaken was the Sixth who doted on his little sister.

[Th, there is no way. That adorable and gentle Milleia trained that kind of dangerous bunches she said……I, impossible!]

When I thought that such dangerous looking group was involved with the Walt House, it made me feel really apologetic.

The Seventh whispered.

[If it’s that aunt then she’d really do that much.]

.

—The mansion of the Circry House.

Ralph Circry who received the report from Renard was doing paperwork inside his office under the lighting of a lantern.

The Circry House that was appointed to an important position in the Bahnseim Kingdom boasted a long history and prestige. His appearance was dignified, but he also looked to be lacking emotion in some respects.

"……You have conveyed the message to Miranda and that person of the Walt House?"

Renard’s posture was straight.

"Yes. The young man looks really reliable. Also, about Shannon-ojousama’s eyes, they seemed to be healed and completely recovered."

Ralph replied expressionlessly.

"That doesn’t matter. What’s important is Miranda."

Ralph sighed inside his heart.

(If only that Doris didn’t get deceived by that harmful insect, there wouldn’t be any need to call Miranda back like this.)

The Circry House’s circumstances.

The second daughter Doris Circry had gotten a lover.

She was totally in love.

And that lover—

"The Walt House is really a bothersome clan. To think that even Doris would also get seduced after Miranda, and in addition there is this situation in the capital."

The other Walt House.

That house’s heir was Lionel Walt.

Although he was a heir, he was the heir of a house that was only barely having its name listed in the lowest rank as a capital noble.

Their living was far removed from the standard of a typical noble, and they also weren't given any post from the royal family. He was a son and heir of a tiny and jobless house.

Ralph turned his gaze to Renard and confirmed.

"How is Miranda's condition? That girl's appearance is good. I think that there won't be any problem to use her for taking in a son-in-law even if she played around some in the past."

The Circry House had three daughters but no son.

The house needed to welcome in a son-in-law to succeed the house.

Thinking of that, Doris's lover Lionel wasn't fitting.

The reason Ralph called back Miranda was because he became in need of a daughter to be used for taking in a son-in-law.

Renard spoke of his impression, but not a little amount of personal emotion colored it.

"She looks similar with Milleia-sama. Her appearance, the way she acts, and even her tone, all of them invoke nostalgia in me. I believe that she has nothing to criticize as a lady."

Ralph ignored the majority of Renard's impression.

What was important was the part whether she could take in a husband or not.

"I see. That girl is of excellent quality. Doris is average. Shannon is out of the question. As I thought, she ought to be brought back to the mansion."

He tried to make Doris to take another husband that wasn’t Lionel, but the person’s strong opposition made Ralph give up on her.

He dropped his gaze on the paper on his desk.

It was a paperwork regarding hippogriff subjugation.

There was a small town in a region called Jioni. It was a land under the direct control of the royal family.

It had no feudal lord and it was governed by a governor that was dispatched by the royal family. Although, this Jioni region that had a small settlement that was unclear whether it was a town or a village—wasn’t really an important place for the royal family.

The paperwork was filled with the plan regarding the preparation of rescuing Jioni due to the palace’s instruction.

And then there was one more paper on the desk filled with a certain plan that was drawn up by the palace.

It was a problem regarding the number of capital nobles that increased too much.

"—Well, before that, I guess we should have the nuisances disappear. There is also this request that came in at a good timing after all."

Renard who listened to Ralph’s words silently closed his eyes—

Chapter 67 – The Two Walt Houses

The mansion of Circry House was big.

The time was slightly before 3 P.M.

I who came bringing a present was standing in front of a magnificent mansion that was built at back of a spacious garden.

Together with me was Miranda-san—and Shannon.

Monika also said that she wanted to come, but it would be troublesome to explain what she was so I made her to wait in the inn.

"Somehow I'm feeling nervous."

It was the Third's fault that I was feeling like this.

[Oh, are you feeling scared to meet your father-in-law? It's alright, it'll be fine if you can tell him please give me your daughter with sincerity. If the other side refuse then you just need to bring her back no matter what.]

He was making fun of me like this.

The person himself didn't have experience in something like this, having a formal marriage interview and then marrying.

Because of that he was enjoying this situation.

Miranda-san made a troubled face looking at me.

"Don't be that nervous. It won't develop into something that you are imagining so you can relax."

I heard about her family’s circumstance last night before coming here.

Unlike the Third who was enjoying the situation, the Sixth was feeling indignation.

[A capital noble screwing around. After sending away his daughters because of his own convenience, he is calling them back again after this long, what’s with that attitude! If he say any bullshit, he’ll get the fear of Walt House beaten up into him. —By Lyle that is!]

The ancestors who were nothing but memory could give me advice but they couldn’t do anything directly.

No matter how big they were talking, they couldn’t do anything.

Even so, they really hated capital noble.

If I could say something, then I only thought of this house as a house of distant relative where the person called Milleia married into but…….

Shannon clutched Miranda-san’s cloth and looking down. She wouldn’t talk since some time ago.

Even if I talked to her, she would only reply with a small voice.

She must have some kind of feeling that was rooted really deeply about this house inside her heart.

"Shannon, it’ll be fine."

"……Yes."

The sisters conversed shortly.

There must be various circumstances and feelings contained within that conversation, but I couldn’t guess them all.

"Now then, let’s enter."

We started walking in order to enter the mansion.

.

There was tea prepared in the reception room that we were showed into.

The three us were waiting before they finally came, Renard-san and—the father of Miranda-san and Shannon, Ralph-san.

Unlike the impression that I had, Ralph-san was smiling.

"Miranda, I’m glad you’re looking well. Shannon, it seems your eyes are healed. I’m happy for you."

Just from those words he seemed like a good father, but Miranda-san didn’t change her expression. And then Shannon was hugging Miranda-san.

Shannon had the power to read someone’s emotion.

……So it must be like that.

The transparent Ralph-san was also talking to me with a smile.

"Even so our house has ties with Walt House. My grandmother was also related with your house. Do you know? You and Miranda might got married to each other in the past."

For those who didn’t know anything they would think of him as a kind person.

However, the Sixth’s Art was showing Ralph-san as red. It was a color that represented hostility.

Even though he was harboring hostility toward me, at the surface he was talking to me with a friendly tone and smiling face.

I heard the Second’s sigh.

[It’s amazing he can hide his true feeling to this degree and smile like that. This is why capital noble can’t be trusted.]

I thought that feudal lords were also the same in the sense that you couldn’t let your guard down against the,

I replied vaguely while confirming that people who seemed to be guards were positioned outside the room.

There was no sign of them trying something, but it seemed the other side was being on guard against us.

"I don’t really care to make any small talk. How about you tell use already what your business is."

Miranda-san cut off the conversation.

Ralph-san sent Miranda-san a slightly criticizing gaze before answering.

"Miranda, calm down for a bit. I’ve also reflected on myself. I want to apologize for sending the two of you away from here."

I couldn’t speak out toward the relationship of this father and daughter.

"I’m sorry that I’m not well-mannered, is it fine if I say that? Don’t act to keep up appearance at this point of time."

Rlaph-san hung down his head slightly before looking at me.

"I’m sorry. Actually there is a family circumstance. Perhaps you’ve heard but, I’ve done something wrong to the two of them. But I’m reflecting on myself now."

The talk wouldn’t progress, so I asked him the reason of calling me here.

"Err, what could be your business with me today?"

Ralph-san straightened his posture.

He faced with a serious expression.

"I know about your relationship with my daughters from Miranda’s letter. As a parent, there is part that I’m slightly unable to accept but—"

Just what kind of letter he received? When I looked at Miranda-san, she looked at me and smiled brightly.

"—In any case, I’m in a position where I’m unable to blame the three of you one-sidedly. But as a parent, I wish for Miranda and……Shannon to return to this house."

He must have finished investigating about me too.

From the perspective of a parent, it couldn’t be helped even if he thought that her daughter got tricked by a man who was having relationship with multiple women. It couldn’t be helped but, everyone inside the Jewel started booing together.

[I wonder what is this guy saying? Don’t act like a good parent after this late.]

[What a disappointment. It won’t be funny if you don’t at least speak something more like ‘I’m not going to give you my daughter!’.]

[It feels like he’s hiding ulterior motive that he is calling his daughters back after this late.]

[……I wonder what he is hiding.]

[AaaaaaAAAAaaaa!! I want to punch him! I want to punch this brat right away!]

[This is where we tell him don’t make us laugh. It’s just like the Fourth said, he has an ulterior motive.]

All the six of them didn’t trust Ralph-san.

Well, I too couldn’t trust him.

I looked at Miranda-san and Shannon.

"I refuse."

[Nicely said!]

[Lyle, how cool! Provoke him while you’re at it.]

[If only you can be this bold every time……]

[……Now you said it.]

[Shameless, it’s fine even if you told him that much, Lyle.]

[Rather won’t it be better if you call him father-in-law?]

Why did I have to speak to him like I was picking a fight?

When I plainly refused like that, Ralph-san made a slightly surprised face. Was he really feeling surprised, or was this also an act? I couldn’t decide.

"……Can I hear what’s your reason?"

"I’ve promised to protect the two of them."

"I don’t want to say this but, both Miranda and Shannon are girl. I don’t want to make them enter something like adventurer work. Am I mistaken as a parent that I want them to stay in the mansion and

grasp normal happiness? Besides, you have several other women. Is there any reason that you are fixated with these two?"

He must wanted to say that he didn't want to give his daughter to that kind of guy.

The Sixth yelled at me.

[Lyle, tell him. I can see the inside of your black heart, tell him that! Tell him, stop with your transparent attitude! Provoke him and make him angry!]

I rolled the Jewel with my fingers to refuse.

Besides……what point there was in provoking and angering him?

[The point……it's to have fun turning the table on him.]

The Sixth guessed what I was thinking and stated so. Everyone else was agreeing with him.

Surely everyone was making an evil face right now.

But, the Fifth alone was slightly calm inside the Jewel.

"It was you who pushed them away."

"I'm regretting that. That's exactly why I'm discussing with you like this. Can't you let them go?"

Perhaps my heart would be moved if I didn't know the circumstance at all.

'It's better if they don't come with me'—I might thought that and persuaded Miranda-san and Shannon instead to return here.

"No way."

"……What do you want? I'll show you my gratitude for looking after the two of them. If you want to be reinstated back as a noble, then I'll support you as much as possible."

The Seventh warned me.

[Lyle, that offer is more charming than being an adventurer but he can't be trusted. With this guy's position, he can prepare the lowest status noble rank as many as he want. He has no intention to give you any support to the best of his ability from the start. Also, in the first place—if he want to make Miranda and Shannon to return back, he should talk to them directly.]

Hearing the Seventh's words, I asked Ralph-san.

"In the first place, shouldn't you ask the two of them directly rather than me?"

Ralph-san made a slightly sad face.

"It's embarrassing but, the two of them don't trust me. Surely the two of them will listen if you're the one telling them. If you're looking for woman, then I shall prepare woman who will satisfy your taste."

—Irritating.

Did Ralph-san think of me as a lustful man who didn't care of anything else as long as the woman was beautiful? The irritated me followed the Sixth's advice.

Who the hell do you think I am?

"……Stop with the transparent attitude. Your black heart is completely see through you know?"

The moment I stated that, I felt killing intent from outside the room.

In the map of Circry House’s mansion inside my head, there were multiple people placed around the reception room.

The color of all of them changed from yellow to red.

"That’s a big attitude. Is that your true nature?"

"I’m not the one who you should ask to decide but the two of them."

I turned my gaze to the two of them, but Ralph-san’s gaze was turned only to Miranda-san.

"Miranda, come back."

Miranda-san smiled slightly.

She folded her hands and crossed her legs.

It wasn’t an attitude of a daughter toward her father. She already decided her answer.

"It’s unfortunate. I have no intention of coming back."

Shannon was looking down.

The Second muttered with a small voice……and slightly sad tone.

[So Shannon isn’t in his sight from the beginning.]

Ralph-san sighed slightly.

His gaze turned stern and his smiling face before this vanished.

His voice also changed into a cold tone.

"That’s unfortunate. I thought that you’re a clever child."

Ralph-san reached out toward his tea. Then, it became some kind of signal and the guards started moving.

The Fifth was,

[They’re coming. Lyle, don’t let your guard down.]

When I lifted up my waist to take a stance, Renard-san who was standing behind Ralph-san tapped the floor with his cane.

When the sound resounded inside the room, the guards who were about to enter the room stopped moving.

Ralph-san drank his tea and acted like nothing happened.

The Seventh praised.

[Hou, so he correctly understand your strength. He did well for a brat.]

Renald-san stopped the action that Ralph-san was going to take.

Renald-san spoke with a smile as though nothing had happened.

"Pardon me. I felt a bit dizzy. It really makes me wish I’m not so old."

When I sat down, Renald-san joined the talk.

"Master, there is one more business that has to be said."

It was impolite for a servant to interrupt a conversation with a guest.

Ralph-san lightly warned Renald-san to which he apologized "I apologize".

Ralph-san placed his cup on the table and brought up a topic.

"I understand that Miranda refuse to come back. But, I have no intention of entrusting my daughter to an adventurer without any ability. And so, I'll have you show me your capability. I want to confirm whether you're worthy to be entrusted with my daughter."

Unlike before his attitude right now was clearly condescending.

"Currently I'm troubled by a troublesome request that came to the palace. Actually monsters—"

From the topic, the request must be intended for adventurer.

When I was going to listen to him, the reception room's door was opened hard.

"Otou-sama!"

Everyone turned their gaze toward the voice. Shannon made a slightly surprised face and muttered.

"So Doris-oneesama look like that."

She was staring fixedly on the face of the second daughter that she saw for the first time.

Miranda-san was also perplexed at her little sister's attitude who suddenly showed up.

Ralph-san was angry. Or rather he was exasperated.

"Doris, get out."

The second daughter of the house of Circry, Doris-san could be said to look similar with Miranda-san and Shannon.

As expected from sisters. But, putting aside the appearance, her personality seemed to be completely different.

"No, I'll say it! Why is Otou-sama calling the two of them back!? Besides, there's even a man—"

Doris-san moved her gaze in annoyance, but her expression suddenly changed into surprise when looking at my face.

I wonder what was wrong?

However, she immediately shook her face and continued talking.

"Even though there's Lionel, why is this kind of man can enter the mansion!? Isn't it decided that Lionel will marry into this house!?"

Lionel?

I looked alternately at Miranda and Shannon's faces, but the two of them shook their head.

"I don't know anything. Well, from her words perhaps he's Doris's fiancée? Or perhaps her lover."

"I've never heard about that. Besides, I also never heard about any talk of marriage."

A story that the two of them didn't know about.

A malicious voice came from inside the Jewel.

It was the Third.

[Fumu. From the way the second daughter-chan talked, the man named Lionel is a groom candidate. But, them trying to call Miranda-chan and Shannon-chan back in this timing means……perhaps, Ralph-kun has a reason that make him doesn't want to recognize this Lionel? Oh hoh, I'm seeing a weakness here.]

Being happy from finding someone's weakness.

Even if I got my mouth torn up I wouldn’t be able to say that this person was a good person.

[The reason he want to separate Miranda-chan from Lyle is also because he want to choose a husband for her that he will take as his successor. Haha~, he said those things as parent but it’s actually for the house’s sake. I understand his feeling but, we—no, Lyle don’t need to feel concerned about it.]

For noble, a heir to succeed the house was an important problem.

But, it was something unrelated to us.

Doris-san was rattling on Ralph-san with red face.

"The heir is Lionel! What is Otou-sama planning with calling back Miranda-oneesama and Shannon now!? I heard about it from a servant. This man is an adventurer! Do you plan to make this kind of man succeeding Circry House!?"

Ralph-san looked fed up.

"I’m not recognizing him. Doris, you too enough already—"

I could see the situation.

It seemed, the reason we were called to this mansion—was that man named Lionel.

A man rushed into the room a bit late.

"Doris, wait a second!"

His age was about the same with me.

His blue hair and eyes were distinctive—he was about as tall as me, but the clothes he was wearing had better quality than mine.

But, vaguely……he didn’t look used to wearing expensive clothes. It gave the impression that he was being worn by the clothes.

And then the inside of the Jewel got noisy.

[……Eh? Could it be we have met him before?]

[Now that you mentioned it, it felt like he was among the hangers-on of the capital girl with bad attitude……]

[This is……at that time I also got this thought but]

[They’re similar.]

[Previously his getup was bad so I didn’t notice but, certainly they’re similar.]

[Even the vague atmosphere of unreliability is similar.]

The ancestors were talking repeatedly about similarity.

Hmm? Just who were they saying as similar?

Or rather, I had met this man once before.

Just like what the ancestors said, it was when we came to the capital before.

There was a noble girl who picked a quarrel with Aria-san, and that girl brought three hangers-on with her. I recalled that one of them was this man.

It felt really nostalgic even though it was only several months ago.

"Somehow he looks similar with Lyle. Like his unreliable atmosphere, or this pathetic aura, they feel just like him."

Shannon looked at me and laughed.

The pathetic man who was trying to somehow stop Doris-san from hounding Ralph-san, was just like me?

Just what kind of joke was that. Stop that.

The reception room became noisy. I pinched Shannon’s cheek in retaliation.

.

We got out to the mansion’s courtyard.

Renald-san suggested to have a temporary break in order for everyone to calm down, so we got out to breathe in fresh air.

But, the courtyard was enveloped in a strange atmosphere.

After all in addition of us three, Doris-san and Lionel-san were also there.

The courtyard couldn’t be said to have calm mood with the five of us there.

Miranda-san stretched out in such mood.

This person had nerves of steel just as I thought.

"I’m tired. Even so, you really said it there Lyle. I was a bit surprised."

"I, is that so?"

"I was happy that you replied instantly there. In addition it was also great how you provoked like that. It had been a long time since I saw Otou-sama made that kind of face."

"……As I thought, he is angry isn’t he?"

"Naturally. Don’t get cold feet after coming this far."

Miranda-san looked happy, in contrast Shannon was making a dissatisfied face.

"You, just what were you thinking making the other side angry like that."

"No, I didn’t really think at that time……"

Because, it was the ancestors inside the Jewel who told me to provoke him.

The ancestors who were the cause were feeling great that they had found the other side’s weakness—wasn’t what they were feeling right now. It seemed they were interested at Lionel who looked similar with me.

As for me, I didn’t think that I was similar with this kind of unreliable guy though.

"Doris, let’s calm down. I’m telling you I’m alright."

"But! It’s Lionel who’ll be adopted into this house. And yet, Onee-sama who is bringing other man and Shannon are called back here……"

"I, it’s fine. I’m not going to lose against the like of adventurer."

The man called Lionel acted subserviently to butter up the girl.

The nobles of Bahnseim had the tendency to look down at former noble who was reduced to become adventurer. In the first place, adventurer was an existence that was looked down at.

Lionel’s remark was also something natural that was the common sense of the nobles.

Doris-san’s harsh glare was directed at Miranda-san.

"What’re you planning, Onee-sama! You said that you won’t leave from Arumsaas!"

Miranda-san replied even while feeling exasperated at her little sister.

"I don’t remember saying anything like that. In the first place, it was Otou-sama who called me here, not us who was barging in here."

"Then please go back! I and Lionel will do something about the problem of Circry House."

"I’ll be thankful if you will do that for us. Putting that aside, I haven’t given my greeting yet. I think you’ve heard but, I’m Miranda. And then, here is the youngest little sister Shannon."

Miranda-san introduced herself to Lionel.

Lionel pressed the back of his head with his hand and lowered his head pathetically while greeting back.

"E, err, I’m Lionel. —Lionel Walt."

……Eh?

I, Shannon, and of course Miranda-san too were speechless.

But, we could only feel surprised.

I could only hear the voices of the ancestors.

[……No way.]

[This is the reason of the similarity.]

[Is he, the capital noble Walt House?]

[Well, that possibility is the highest I guess.]

[Even so this pathetic aura. It reminds me when meeting Lyle the first time.]

[I thought that the house is still remaining but, I never thought we would meet like this. This world is a small place.]

Doris-san brushed up her hair.

She was making a smug face.

[Lionel is different from the adventurer over there, he’s from a family with long history. His house’s status is a bit low, but he is a heredity noble and his house has existed since the founding of the country. He’s in a different level from the adventurer over there.]

I thought that perhaps it was another person or mistaken identity.

But, from Doris-san’s words it seemed that it wasn’t a mistake.

Shannon looked at the face of me and Lionel alternately.

"Walt? Lyle’s family name is also Walt isn’t it? Eh, relative?"

This time Doris-san was the one surprised hearing that.

"……Eh?"

Perhaps she thought that it wouldn’t be any use talking with Shannon. She was looking at her big sister Miranda-san instead.

"Lyle Walt. The former heir of a house of count. If we’re speaking about lineage then their status is higher than even our house. Or rather, they’re a distant relative with us."

When I greeted this time, Doris-san’s face turned bitter.

It seemed she guessed my background.

And it seemed—Lionel also guessed it.

He clutched his chest and glared at me from behind Doris-san. From how he was furrowing his brows, I could feel a strong hatred from him.

"……So, you’re from feudal lord noble Walt House."

Lionel’s dark emotion.

It was hostility that he directed at me.

The place was enveloped in silence. Before long, a servant came from the mansion to call us.

.

I and Lionel were shown into an office instead of a reception room.

It was Ralph-san’s work room. Unlike before there wasn’t even tea prepared.

Ralph-san was sitting on a chair while leaning back. He turned his gaze alternately toward us who was brought inside.

"So it’s Walt House every single one of you. My daughters has similar taste."

While I was troubled at how to reply, Ralph-san quickly broached his business.

He placed a sheet of paper on the table.

"About what I was going to say before, there was a request for the palace. There was a town in the place called Gioni, but a hippogriff showed up there leading monsters. There’s a plan to send a subjugation group from the capital."

Certainly such matter was written in the paperwork.

Hippogriff—it was a monster that had the head of eagle, the body of horse, and wings. I once read in a book that its front legs were eagle legs.

Its head also wasn't bad. I remembered that it was written as a troublesome monster.

"It's a request to the palace isn't it?"

Hearing my question, Lionel butt in from the side thinking that I didn't know anything.

"There is also a method of recruiting adventurers and citizens when forming a subjugation group. Do you know nothing?"

……What's with this guy?

The way he spoke was also irritating, but I thought that his last words were unnecessary.

While the atmosphere was worsening, Ralph-san continued his talk.

"That's how it is. This time its decided to recruit applicants from houses without occupation—the jobless low ranked nobles and the citizens."

Capital nobles were living in the royal capital, but that didn't mean all of them had job.

Because of that, the houses lacking any role or position—in other words jobless would be assigned temporary work and the like.

If it was asked why the jobless houses were remaining, it was for preparation in case something happened. They were spares.

It seemed that they would participate in this kind of request in order to obtain work and in order to be promoted.

……From where I was standing, I thought that it would be better if the palace immediately sent the regular army to subjugate the monsters.

However, if this was the method of the capital then it wasn't my place to complain.

"Will the town be able to hold out?"

When I asked for confirmation if the town would be destroyed by the monsters, Ralph-san asserted that there was no worry of that.

"This sort of case often happen. Speaking from the scale of the monsters, the town will hold for one more month. The capital is forming a subjugation group but……I want the two of you to participate in this subjugation."

Just what was this person planning?

While I was pondering, Lionel seemed to think that I was hesitating.

"I'll do it. Please let me do it!"

Ralph-san nodded.

"As expected from the man who Doris chose. I'm counting on you. Now then, what about you Lyle-kun?"

Why was Lionel getting this enthusiastic?

While I was unable to understand, the ancestors spoke out.

It was the Third and the Sixth.

[Aa~, this must be that. Yep, perhaps Lyle doesn't understand this kind of feeling.]

[Yeah. Lyle is certainly is unreliable but, he is skilled after all.]

What were they saying?

The Fourth listened to them and then told me in conclusion as though the matter was decided.

[Lyle, accept this request. Looks like there is a catch to it, but even excluding that Lyle also has to experience it.]

I didn’t really understand but, it was the opinion of the ancestors so I couldn’t ignore it.

They judged that it would be useful for me.

"……What’s the reward?"

Lionel snapped at my words.

"You! Are you that much of vulgar guy!? You don’t understand the meaning of this request!"

The request’s meaning? Certainly I didn’t understand at all but, could it be Lionel had noticed something?

For some reason that felt vexing.

But, the Second was—.

[This guy, does he misunderstand something?]

—He said that, so I returned to talk with Ralph-san.

So this Lionel actually didn’t know anything too. I was a bit relieved.

"I’m an adventurer. I won’t work if there’s no reward."

"Of course you’re. With the size of your group I’ll prepare ten gold coins. If you contribute greatly then I’ll add extra reward."

He had learned the size of our party accurately.

As expected, he must have watched us since we entered the capital and investigated various things.

"Ten gold coins are too cheap."

"I will prepare a lot of money for famous adventurer. But, your fame is insufficient. Speak only after you have shown your capability."

As a party leader, I wanted to refuse this request. But, the ancestors told me to accept.

"I also have preparation to make. I'll need to receive fifty gold coins. That's not including the reward for the success of the request."

Honestly speaking we had some leeway with money.

But, I didn't want to be told to work cheaply.

"How confident. Very well. If you succeed then I promise to prepare a hundred gold coins. However, the reward is only if you succeed. I won't allow you to run away at the middle."

The two of us listened to the detail before leaving the room.

.

Outside the room.

Lionel talked to me at the corridor.

His attitude was obviously making light of me.

"You don't get it huh."

"What is?"

Perhaps he didn't like my attitude, or perhaps he just didn't like me. Lionel was speaking snappily.

"This is why someone raised as spoiled brat is troubling. This is a test to decide the heir of Circry House. To see which one of us is worthy to become the next head of Circry House."

Was that the case?

It was something irrelevant for me.

"You want to marry into this house that much?"

Lionel clenched his fist hearing my words.

"You who were born from a house of count won't get it. You can't even imagine my life who was born from the lowest rank of noble who don't even has any post."

The living of noble at the lowest rank without even any post seemed to be really painful. From Lionel's perspective, someone like me must be a spoiled brat who didn't know any hardship.

"I'm staking my life into this chance. I'm not going to show any mercy if you get in my way."

Lionel said that and left. I saw off his back and tilted my head.

"……Is it that important? I think that the people being attacked by the monsters right now is in more trouble though."

I couldn't understand Lionel's drive.

The ancestors sensed that.

The Second was especially exasperated.

[Things are going smoothly for you Lyle, or rather you are fundamentally capable. You can't understand Lionel's feeling I guess.]

The Fourth also had the same opinion.

[This is because you're too capable. Lyle, are you perhaps thinking that if his life is so hard then it will be alright if he just work?]

When I honestly nodded in respond, the Fifth sounded troubled.

[It's not wrong. It's not wrong but……Lyle, this world isn't filled with only someone like you. Learn that from the case this time.]

I headed to the reception room in order to meet up with Miranda-san and Shannon.

Chapter 68 – Preparation

—There was a topic that could be heard sporadically in the royal capital Centralle.

It was the rumor that the palace was forming a force to subjugate monsters.

The merchants thought that they would be able to sell various goods like weapon or food and acted busily.

Rather than renowned adventurers, it was the jobless nobles and normal citizens instead who jumped at this kind of story.

Houses that had no job even if the title could be passed down to the next generation and the knights whose title was only limited to one generation were dreaming to be promoted. Other than them there was also the commoners who wanted to obtain achievement and became a knight. Those kinds of people participated into this subjugation group. That was the state of the royal capital.

Aria was walking through the street of Centralle nostalgically.

She was looking around the food stalls since the morning.

"H~m, the price is a bit expensive."

The owner talked to Aria who was looking at the merchandise.

"Young lady, you must be coming from other place. The price in the capital is high. After all, there is the transport cost of bringing them until here. I'll sell them cheaper than other shop so buy some."

Aria could only laugh at the shop owner's words with a complicated expression.

In fact he was giving her a cheap price so he must be a kind person but…….

(I was born in Centralle though!)

And yet she was thought as coming from other place.

She couldn’t accept it at all but, it was also the proof that she had grown tough as an adventurer.

She wasn’t a tomboy noble daughter like in the past. She had become an adventurer whose true strength could be seen clearly just from her appearance.

Aria received the goods she purchased before walking back to the inn.

Then, she encountered a housewife who was in the middle of shopping standing in front of a shop.

It was a sight that could be found in any city.

She was moving to pass through her but,

"Did you hear? It seems the subjugation force is recruiting applicants."

"I want to make the deadbeats in my place to join it too."

"Oh, in that case I want to make the parasites in my place to go too."

The housewives laughing with each other were quite old. It seemed they had sons. They were talking how they wanted their sons who wouldn’t succeed the family to join the subjugation force to earn money or to obtain success in life.

Aria pretended to look at the goods lined up in the shop while listening to their conversation.

"I heard it’s at a small town called Gioni."

"I never heard about that place. Is it a countryside?"

"I wonder who will be leading the force. I want to give a kick at the men in the house to make them join up."

The housewives were eager, but their attitude changed drastically when they heard a certain name.

"You know, it’s Norma. That Norma Arnette. The female knight."

"That Norma? So she was promoted."

"I wonder about that. Isn’t this the army getting rid of a nuisance? Haa, then it’s no good. Even though I think that this is finally a chance for them to be successful in life."

The housewives returned to their shopping.

(Norma? I never heard that name. Well, I’m not knowledgeable regarding that topic though.)

Aria came from Centralle, but she didn’t know about Norma.

When she moved to leave.

"Young lady, has you decided about what to buy?"

The shop owner talked to her with a friendly smile. Aria couldn’t say that she was only pretending to look around and bought some random item before leaving that place—.

.

Centralle’s inn.

When I became alone in the room, I sent my consciousness into the Jewel in order to talk with the ancestors.

I consulted them regarding the request but…….

[Heir candidate? What are you talking about? Do you seriously think that Ralph-kun will decide the heir in that way?]

The Third was exasperated.

"No, but you know. That Lionel guy was speaking that confidently so, I thought that perhaps it might actually be the case."

[No way. It’s absolutely no way. Perhaps Lionel-kun thought that, but Ralph-kun didn’t say even a word about that. At best he was only making him to get such idea. In the first place see……the heir that Ralph-kun want will be someone with the mentality of civil official rather than a knight with strong physical strength won’t he]

When I thought about Circry House’s occupation, then certainly a heir whose strongpoint was physical strength would be unnecessary.

"Then, what’s the meaning of this request?"

The Third seemed to be not really interested.

[It’s just hippogriff right? Perhaps there isn’t any deep meaning to it and he is really just troubled?]

I pondered for a bit before asking the Third.

"I don’t understand that. There are knight orders in the kingdom, and other than them there are also soldiers right? Then, everything will be taken care of if they just send them as help right away."

The Seventh joined the talk.

[Lyle, in the world there are also times when doing the right thing isn’t the answer. Naturally what you said Is correct but, at the same time it’s also wrong.]

The Seventh was slowly speaking in a way that was easy for me to understand.

[Do you know why there are jobless houses that don’t even have anything to do?]

"I think that they are spares though."

[Right. They’re spares. But, don’t you think that it’s not good if the spares continue to increase in number?]

The explanation from the Seventh from there was the talk that the nobles who could pass down their title were also increasing in number. Naturally there were also houses that went extinct, but the problem was the number of nobles still increased.

The second son and third son of prestigious nobles went independent and formed a new house.

There was also case when a knight raised achievement in battlefield and got promoted to become a noble who could pass down his title.

The number wasn’t just decreasing, it was increasing.

In that case, it was the palace that got troubled. They were paying annuity to nobles who didn’t even work after all, so the cost was also increasing in proportion of the increase of nobles.

In that case I thought that it would be fine if they stopped increasing the number of noble, but it seemed that was also wrong. The second son and third son who received education but couldn’t

succeed their house, what would happen if they had no dream or hope?

It would be still fine if they became adventurer, but there was a possibility that they would take the wrong path and dirtied their hand with crime.

Noble could use magic.

In a lot of case the damage would be bigger from them compared to commoner doing crime.

[Balance is important in everything. —It's necessary to decrease their number moderately while creating a chance for them to climb up. It also takes money to send knight order or trained soldiers.]

Rather than wearing away the important knights and soldiers, they wanted to wear away the nobles who weren't working. It seemed that was the motive of the palace.

The Fourth pushed up his glasses slightly to fix its position while saying.

[Being able to select the battlefield properly is a good thing. Lyle, consider the subjugation force as a force only in name. And then, try looking at your surrounding a bit. If you work with them who are different from adventurer, there should be something that you'll be able to see.]

The Sixth also nodded.

[Yeah. After all the people around Lyle are all too capable. I won't say that's a bad thing but……it's better to know this thing beforehand.]

There were still a lot of things that I was lacking in.

Setting that aside—.

"Come to think of it, this is a different topic but why is everyone hating capital noble? No, I understand the reason but……despite that some of you allow your daughter to be wedded by them or working together with them."

Like Circry House's relationship with Walt House.

I wouldn't say that it would be fine to not have any relationship with them if it was unpleasant but, I couldn't understand why their attitude wasn't clear.

The ancestors spoke the circumstance by turn starting from the Second.

[I guess. The best is to not associate with them. But, we also can't do that.]

[After all from the perspective of the palace, the feudal lords are also people that can't be let alone to do as they please.]

[They're unpleasant, but there is no choice of not associating with them.]

[If we refuse to associate with them, we might get attacked in the worse case.]

[Regarding this, it's that. It's what they called give-and-take.]

[It's necessary. We have to associate with them even if it's unpleasant.]

I tilted my head.

"But……everyone hate them isn't it?"

[I hate them. Completely hate them. I want to make them a target for my arrows!]

[It make you want to punch them when you see their face isn't it? Or rather I hit them just once in the past. It was really refreshing at that time!]

[I want to slowly corner them. I want to see their crying face.]

[If I can cut them down without causing any future trouble……I think I'll be able to make a mountain of their corpses.]

[They're repulsing!]

[The word hate is insufficient to describe it. ……The urge to kill is welling up!]

It seemed the ancestors hated them more than I expected. Everyone was making a scary face.

I shouldn't ask just what in the world happened when they were alive.

"Even so everyone get along with them?"

The Third shrugged.

[That's right. Besides it's often said isn't it……that is that, this is this.]

Both sides hated each other, but if there was profit to be had then they would get along……being a noble was hard.

I thought that I would rather stay like I am right now.

Then, the Second raised his hand slightly. He looked somewhat embarrassed.

[By the way……can I borrow Lyle?]

Everyone else made a really complicated expression.

[Ye, yep. Do your best.]

The Third too didn’t joke around this time. He even gave his support.

The Second looked embarrassed.

[Sto, stop that! It’ll be a success for sure this time! This time I’ll absolutely pass down my Art to Lyle and vanish for sure!]

The Second……you still hadn’t given that up?

.

Inside the Second’s memory room.

The scenery of the territory that the Second once ruled was spread out. I could see the scene of tranquil and well ordered village.

For the Second who went through hardships to improve the messed up territory, this scenery must be his number one.

The village’s scenery looked like the representation of the Second’s precise character.

We walked in that village heading to the training place for bow.

Although I called it a training place, it was only a spacious place with several targets lined up.

In front of the targets that looked used really frequently, the Second fired up himself.

[Yosh!]

"Err……we’re still doing this?"

[See here. Our role is to teach our Art to you! Even though previously I said my farewell to everyone as though it’s the end, and yet I returned together with you to that place. Do you understand my feeling? It was just extremely embarrassing.]

Certainly it felt like I had done something bad. I felt responsible that I couldn’t inherit the Art. But, it was the ancestors who thought of their own that I’d be able to do it.

……It shouldn’t be my responsibility.

The Second fired up himself again and explained his Art.

[The third stage of the Art is Select. Originally it’s something to make you able to fix your aim at the target that you want to use the Art at but, it too will become like this if you use it in this way.]

The Second took out his bow from somewhere.

This place was a world of memory. Weapon could be summoned right away, and even inflicted wounds could be healed completely instantly.

With five arrows in hand, he faced a target and fired.

Then, the arrows changed direction midway. They were heading toward the targets that were lined up. The five arrows each hit the center of the five targets.

I made a small applause.

"It’s mysterious no matter how many times I see it."

[Amazing right? It’s different from its original use but, it’s really convenient. Now then……Lyle, try it.]

The bow was handed to me.

The bow of the Second was solid and showed sign of frequent use. It made me felt its age.

The number of arrows handed to me was three.

I took a stance and focused on the Art.

It was like a mark was floating at the spot that I aimed at. It felt like the arrow would head there naturally if I let go……but, when I fired the arrows.

[WHYYYYYYYY!]

The Second held his head with his hands felt distressed seeing that the arrows only headed at the direction I was pointing at.

[You should be able to do it! Lyle, aren’t you holding back there?]

My shoulders dropped.

"I’m not doing anything like holding back. This is really difficult."

[Really? You aren’t lying?]

The Second was doubting me but, a rustling sound came from a nearby bushes. The Second took the bow from me and then readied it right away.

The movement was flowing smoothly that my gaze was spontaneously stolen by it.

A one horned rabbit rushed out from the bushes.

—It was a monster that was considered as Walt House’s hated enemy, especially by the First until the Third.

[Haahh-!]

The arrow was fired and instantly pierced the heart.

[Yossha!]

The Second put away the bow.

"……Why is a one horned rabbit came out here?"

The Second replied vaguely at my question.

[Well, I strongly hate it, so that might be why. More importantly, what’s the reason for the failure? I thought that you would absolutely succeed though.]

The Second was obstinate.

—The night Lyle and others returned from Circry House’s mansion.

Clara piled up the ten books that she purchased in the royal capital and stared at them. She was troubled of which book to start reading first but, before that she threw a question at Novem who was in the same room with her about something that was in her mind.

"I heard that Lyle-san accepted a request from Circry House but, is Novem-san alright with that?"

There were few times when Novem objected to Lyle’s policy.

At best she would protest if it looked like there would be danger to Lyle.

"It’s Lyle-sama’s decision. I won’t object."

Thinking from the monster’s strength and scale, it was unthinkable that they would lose.

Certainly, it would be a convenient request if they wanted to raise their fame.

"I heard that the circumstances in the royal capital is different from Arumsaas. Like how the majority of the participants are nobles and citizens rather than adventurers. Will it be alright?"

For Lyle and co, this was a request they didn’t have experience in.

At the same time, there was also the circumstances of the royal capital. Thinking of the essentials when doing work with adventurers like normal, Clara thought this request would become a painful experience.

Clara had understood just how troublesome nobles were from Arumsaas.

Besides, there was a point that Clara was concerned about.

"It seems that Circry House said they won’t allow Miranda-san to come along."

Don’t bring along your party member.

There was no adventurer who would accept being told that.

But, the reason was as it was.

Circry House was the house of Miranda and Shannon. Those words could be taken as them worrying about the two of them.

Novem replied indifferently.

"They didn’t mention Shannon-chan’s name, and from Lyle-sama’s story it’s the egoistic circumstances of the other side. There is no need to pay attention to that."

Clara was also intending to do so.

Miranda had refused that demand and declared that she would bring along Shannon too.

But—.

(Novem-san's evaluation standard for everything is a bit strange. She know who she faced, but she is still putting this attitude even when dealing with noble. Isn't she scared of noble?)

Even though she should have lived in the noble society until now, when she was judging about the right and wrong of everything she would consider it with Lyle as the center to a degree that could even be called absolute.

If she looked at Lyle's upbringing and his relationship with Novem, then there was also a part that could make her understand Novem's way of thinking. However, there was also parts that made her unable to understand at the same time.

Lyle might be formerly a noble, but right now he was nothing more than an adventurer.

The way he spoke was soft, and he also gave a kind atmosphere. Clara evaluated Novem highly, but that aspect of her still weighed her mind heavily.

(She is also not stupid by any means, she should understand that the possibility of Lyle-san being able to return being a noble is low, and yet)

Novem's attitude as though noble was something that didn't worth it for her to pay attention to them strangely weighed on Clara's mind.

Even while thinking that, Clara judged that it wasn't something so serious that she had to express her opinion to the party's reliable magician. Her hand reached to one of the piled up books—.

.

—The next day.

Aria and Sophia gathered inside a room in the inn.

Together with them was Shannon who was house-sitting.

Novem and Miranda were going out, while Clara was looking around the bookstore in the capital, so they weren't here.

"Right, then we will start the class now."

Monica was acting as a teacher.

She was holding a small whiteboard in front of the three who were sitting side by side.

The word "tsundere" was written on the board.

"The lesson today is regarding tsundere. Everyone, don't think that tsundere is something easy. Tsundere is extremely difficult to balance, and yet it's a captivating—"

Sophia stopped that explanation of Monica.

She raised her hand slightly with reservation.

"Say……Monica-san."

"Sensei. Call me that right now."

"Se, sensei. What is tsundere?"

It was an unknown word for the three of them.

Monica made an exasperated face and answered.

"It means taking a cold attitude to an opposite sex who you like while sometimes also acting kind to them."

Aria expressed her thought honestly.

"What’s that? Isn’t that just a troublesome person?"

Monica put her hand on her forehead and then she shook her head like that.

"You don’t get it. Now listen well, the attitude of you three to chicken dickwad. It can also be categorized as tsundere if you think about it."

Shannon who was listening to the talk while eating sweets laughed with a mouth that was stained around it.

"That’s something unrelated to me. Because I hate that guy."

Monica snorted.

"That attitude is already tsundere you know, this little girl!"

"Wait, what do you mean by that!? More importantly, aren’t your attitude to us really bad?"

Monica answered with a straight face.

"What about it? Then, we’re continuing the lesson."

Aria who was listening to the talk thought.

(There was nothing to do so I tried talking to Monica by mistake but, this is troublesome.)

The three of them had nothing to do, so they asked for explanation at Monica who was using incomprehensible word like usual.

Because of that it turned into a troublesome thing like this.

Monica’s lesson continued.

"Tsundere, it’s a double edged sword. If you take a wrong step you will anger the other party and they won’t notice your fondness to

them at all. That’s why, hopeless tsundere like the three of you should stop right away."

Sophia got dejected.

"Ho, hopeless tsundere? So we are hopeless."

The diligent Sophia was seriously dejected, but Shannon consoled her.

"You don’t need to mind that. Because, this is Monica. This girl is broken."

From the perspective of Aria and others, Monica who was calling Lyle as chicken dickwad even though he was her master only looked like a broken thing.

Even so, she wasn’t a bad person so they got along like this but…….

"It’s rude to call someone broken. Very well. This Monica will show you what a genuine tsundere is. Oh, nice timing. Chicken dickwad is coming to this room."

Footsteps came from the corridor.

Monica seemed to understand who was coming from that sound.

She immediately put away the whiteboard with tsundere written on it, but it looked like it got sucked between her maid uniform and her apron.

The three were always puzzled seeing how anything could be stored into that gap.

Monica’s own existence was too mysterious that no one asked her about it, but they were curious just what was with the gap between the maid uniform and the apron.

There was a knocking sound. Monica replied.

It was Lyle who entered.

"Eh? What are you all doing together here?"

Aria shrugged.

"There’s nothing to do so we’re playing. More importantly what do you need?"

Although she said that, in reality it was their turn to guard their items in the inn. They also served as Shannon’s guard.

The people of Circry House might come to take back Shannon. If it was Miranda she would be able to escape, but they were worried if it was Shannon in such situation.

"I’m thinking to go out buying food."

Sophia tilted her head.

"I heard that we would go out for dinner though? Besides, Novem-san and Miranda-san said that they will arrange for things like emergency ration and the like."

Lyle grasped the Jewel hanging on his neck.

"……Well, it’s for reserve I guess? I’m borrowing Monica."

Lyle would take along Monica for this kind of time.

But, Monica brushed up her blonde twintail, and then she took a different attitude from usual in order to put tsundere into practice.

"Oh, you are calling on this Monica? Allow me to refuse. Well, if you insist though—"

When she spoke until there, Lyle easily withdrew.

"You don’t want to come? Then, Sophia-san, please help out."

Sophia nodded and stood up. Then Monica clung on Lyle’s leg.

"Wait! Please wait! I’m lying. It’s a lie! I want to go shopping with chicken dickwad. Don’t leave me behind!"

"What a troublesome girl."

Lyle shrunk back from Monica who started crying, but he apologized to Sophia and then talked to Monica.

"If you want to go then say so from the start."

"That’s not it. I only wanted to attract chicken dickwad’s attention."

Lyle was exasperated at the crying Monica. Even so he took her hand and made her stood up. Although he said ‘What a hopeless girl’, he had a smile on his face.

"I’ll be waiting ahead at the lobby, so come down when you finished preparing."

Lyle got out of the room.

When Lyle was gone, Monica turned around to the three.

"Did you see? This is tsundere. Oops, I can’t waste time like this. I have to hurry to where chicken dickwad is. Well then everyone, sayonara~"

Monica hurriedly chased after Lyle.

The three were dumbfounded.

Sophia opened her mouth.

"So that’s tsundere. How should I say it……it only looked like their usual conversation."

Shannon didn’t look bothered.

"Isn’t it pointless to pay that any mind?"

Among them, it was Aria alone who was falling into thought.

(……Eh? Just which one of them was the tsundere?)

Rather than the crying Monica, Lyle who was pushing her away at first before acting kind to her at the end even with some reluctance was the tsundere wasn’t it?

She didn’t speak out such doubt. And then the three of them deeply talked about tsundere with excitement. It was a deep talk for the three, however from the perspective of outsider it was a shallow talk without any meaning.

The conclusion that they reached was "Tsundere is an abyss" which was incomprehensible except for the three of them. The three of them passionately talked together of that conclusion to Clara who returned back.

The one who was the most bothered must be Clara who suddenly got dragged into such talk—.

.

I who took along Monica in order for shopping looked at the bags that I got my hands full with.

Vegetable and fruits, then cheeses and other things. I had purchased various items.

Even after purchasing this many, considering our number it couldn’t be said as more than enough.

When I looked back, Monica was carrying a wooden box and a sack that was filled with items.

From the outsider’s perspective, it only looked like a man was making a woman carrying heavy luggage while he himself was carrying light things.

In fact it was exactly as it looked so it was troubling.

"For now, we’ll be alright for food with this I guess?"

Monica answered while holding up the great amount of luggage.

"Please don’t worry. I will at least secure the food for chicken dickwad no matter what the cost. You can even leave procuring food on site to this Monica."

This girl was really able to do anything huh.

But—.

"We are stocking up food because we don’t want to search for food on site though. Or rather, from your reply it means that this amount isn’t enough then?"

"Well, frankly speaking this amount is worrying when thinking about the scheduled period of the subjugation. In the first place, we also don’t really understand how long we will have to stay there."

It was the ancestors’ suggestion to stock up food.

Procurement on site. Monica was saying that in the sense that she would gather up foods like wild animal or edible wild plants at our destination, but with our deployment this time the place for the procurement on site would be—Gioni.

It was possible that the subjugation force that would be dispatched in order to protect the city would ransack the town because the food wasn’t enough.

We stocked up food in order to prevent that.

Besides, with the Seventh’s Art then it was possible to preserve fresh food.

It was a really convenient Art.

While I was walking into a deserted alley in order to throw the foods in my hands into the Seventh’s Art, I heard a familiar voice.

"Aa~, this is the worst."

A girl—an elf was sitting on the ground. When I thought that I had seen her somewhere before, it was actually Eva-san.

My reunion with this girl who I encountered in another city was in a narrow and dirty alley while she was sitting down on the ground……it was really hard to call it a moving reunion.

.

"Thank you Lyle!"

Eva-san continued eating while saying her thanks.

The restaurant table had dishes lined up to an astonishing degree. Eva-san who was eating them up one after another seemed to be really hungry.

She—Eva-san was an elf who ran away from the forest where she was born and lived as a performer. She was also an unusual person who didn’t belong to a troupe and acted by herself.

Elf was a hunting people living in the forest, but at the same time they had strong curiosity and there were also a lot of elves who lived the forest and lived as a troupe of traveling performer.

They loved song and story, to a degree that people's impression of performer was strongly attached to elf.

I met Eva-san when I joined a dungeon subjugation previously. At that time she would perform her singing for us in exchange of taking care of her daily need in our tent.

Even I who hadn't heard many songs and stories were enjoying her performance, so she must be skilled.

She was a person overflowing with energy as could be seen from how she was traveling throughout the country seeking material for her song. Her expression would frequently change with her various emotions becoming clear to see.

She cooperated with me at the dungeon subjugation.

Such Eva-san right now was ravenously eating foods joyfully in front of me.

Monica was sitting beside me with an astonished look.

"What’s this woman who might break the image of elf? Even though I thought that elf will be a more fantasy creature, she is eating ravenously like this."

This girl, just what kind of image she held about elf?

Eva-san objected.

"When I’m on stage then I’ll sell as much dream and fantasy as you want. But, you can’t fill your stomach just with that! Lyle, can I order second?"

Eva-san asked for second with a sweet voice, so I looked at the table. There that great amount of food had been finished up.

Just how much she was able to eat?

I asked for second serving and I asked Eva-san’s story until the food came.

"By the way, why are you in the capital? Didn’t you say before about going around the west region?"

"I went to do that. And then I headed to the capital next, but I was unfortunate and couldn’t find a troupe who can go with me. When I entered alone all my money was used up."

When I asked, it seemed that the place to perform in large scale town and city was fought for by many groups. Everyone would want to perform in a place with many people. It would be difficult for someone to suddenly come and performed their art in a city like this.

"When I sang my song without asking permission, I got my money taken away with various excuses like venue fee or whatever. The royal capital is an unpleasant place."

Monica was tilting her head.

"So elf is traveling performer who display their song and performance. Well, it’s natural that there is that kind of rule for performer in a city this big, aren’t you the one in the wrong here? You should talk with the one in charge beforehand."

Eva-san couldn’t argue back.

Monica continued.

"Even so, a business of selling dream is it? For everything outside of that, you have it realistically tough. As an elf you should aim to be a more fairytale-like creature."

"Why are you harboring such strange fantasy about elf huh?"

"Elf has an image of being fairytale-like, magical, noble, high-handed, and also frail."

"How can elf be frail when they’re living in the forest or living while traveling everywhere! I’m telling you, elf is a hunting tribe! We can also use magic but physical strength is also important! Besides what do you mean high-handed! If you’re picking a fight then I’ll take you on!"

"What an elf who is easy to lose temper. Even though I thought that you’re a more intellectual creature, how unfortunate."

"What’s with you? What’re you looking for from elf?"

When the dishes were brought, Eva-san resumed her eating.

I asked Eva-san about her plan forward.

"Then, after this you will talk to the people in charge and sing somewhere?"

"I was considering that, but in the end I couldn’t pay the venue cost so I have to earn money first."

"Should I lend you money?"

"H~m, that’s an attractive offer but I’ll refrain from that. I want to manage somehow with my own strength."

While I was feeling impressed by Eva-san’s words, Monica was chuckling.

"You’ll persevere by yourself after sitting on the road hungrily and ended up getting treated food by chicken dickwad? Elf’s sense of humor is really first class. You should aim to be a comedian."

No matter how you thought about it, that only sounded like she was making fun of her. Eva-san’s eyebrows were twitching.

"I, I’ll repay this back properly. I’ve also obtained new song materials, so I can also sing."

Monica snorted.

"That’s great. But, although you seem to be very confident……we don’t really have time so allow us to decline. Good grief, even though it’s my time to be alone with chicken dickwad, it got stolen by this kind of glutton elf instead."

"You, cut it out. I’m sorry, this girl is broken."

When I apologized, Eva-san seemed to be curious and stared at Monica.

"Broken? What, did she get her head hit?"

"Ah, no……well, this girl is like an ancient relic. She is an automatic puppet called automaton."

Eva-san’s eyes started to sparkle when I explained.

"What’s that how curious! Hey, tell me the story. I’ll do anything. I’ll do anything so tell me!"

Eva-san pitched forward with great interest.

"Right now I’m a bit busy so—I’ll tell you next time."

"You’re busy."

"Yes. Actually I’m participating in the subjugation force."

.

I and Monica……and also Eva-san returned to the inn.

"I’ll participate in the hippogriff subjugation so please take care of me!"

Novem and Miranda-san who were in the lobby each showed different reaction.

"Long time no see isn’t it, Eva-san."

"Elf……will she be useful?"

"Long time no see, Novem! Also, the rude woman there. Even though I look like this I’ve been together with a troupe of travelling performer. I’m used to travelling, and I can also use magic and bow. I won’t be in the way."

Miranda-san and Eva-san started arguing for some reason.

Novem came to my side.

"Lyle-sama, you are making Eva-san to join?"

"Yes. She said that it’s her thanks for treating her to food. Other than that, she said that she want to come along because she want to

get song material and because she want to hear about what happened at Arumsaas."

Elf who was brimming with curiosity would do absurd thing in their search for material or story topic.

It felt like she would come along even if I ignored her, then in that case it would be safer for us to act together.

"Elf is good walker after all. It will be helpful if she is with us."

"You’re right."

Eva-san was still continuing her quarrel with Miranda-san. It seemed she didn’t get on well with her.

"It’ll be troubling even if you come along for playing around."

"Playing around!? I’m serious here! I’m seriously wanting new song material!"

"……Elf is really troublesome."

"What do you mean by that!?"

I wished they got along but, it seemed the two of them got the worst impression of each other.

We would join the hippogriff subjugation force with these members but…..would it be okay?

Chapter 69 – Hippogriff Subjugation Force

—In a storehouse of Circry House's mansion.

Lionel was gathering his acquaintances.

They were jobless nobles like him. And then, they were second son or third son who couldn't inherit their house and dependent to their house.

"Sorry to call you guys here. Actually it's about the subjugation force this time, my future is hanging on this."

Lionel was seriously aiming to marry into Circry House.

The girl who he accidentally smooth talked successfully was a daughter of a house of viscount—Doris.

When he asked her, the eldest daughter and third daughter had left the house, and the remaining child was only Doris.

At this rate being a heir of a viscount house wouldn't be a dream.

"Even if I participate it would be hard without my own troops beforehand. How about it? Will you guys join as my subordinates?"

The five people who were gathered here looked dissatisfied.

"Why do we have to become your subordinates?"

They had known each other from a long time ago, but Lionel wasn't their leader. Because of that they were dissatisfied.

"Is it alright for you to say that? If I can marry into Circry House, even you guys will be able to get job you know? Besides, you can

even be promoted if you raise achievement in the subjugation this time."

When Lionel said that, he showed them the armors and weapons that he asked Doris to prepare.

The armors weren't full body armor, even so the armors were proper standard armor.

The swords and spears were also brand new.

"Awesome."

"It's okay for us to receive this!?"

"If I have this then even I"

Just like Lionel, they also had no money. They were unable to obtain weapon and armor, so they couldn't go out to fight monster.

Even if they participated in the subjugation force, someone who didn't have armor and weapon would only get turned away.

Because of that, the color of their eyes changed in front of the proper equipment.

'As long as they have this then even they can obtain success', they thought.

Lionel gloated inside his heart.

(I'll work these guys hard with this equipment as the bait.)

"Idiot. It's a loan. But, if you guys raise achievement then I'm not going to mind to give them as your reward. Work hard so I can become the heir of this house."

There were equipments for ten people prepared separated from Lionel's equipment.

"Hey, can I call my acquaintance to come too?"

"Naturally. After all it won't look good unless I can gather ten people at least."

The subjugation force this time was a mishmash gathering. In such a mishmash subjugation force, if there was anyone that he could cooperate with it would be his own comrades that he gathered by his own effort. After all he didn't know if there would be others who could be relied, and there would also be rivals that he would compete with for achievement.

(If there are ten people then it will be quite the number. I don't know who will be the captain of the subjugation force but, there's no way they'll be able to ignore me. I also asked Doris to support me, if I can obtain great achievement here……I won't lose against that guy from the branch house.)

That guy from the branch house. He meant Lyle.

From the view point of the capital noble Walt House, the feudal lord noble Walt House was treated as branch house.

Lionel was constantly thinking.

(Even though we're the same Walt House, and yet I'm poor, while that guy is rich……that's just unreasonable.)

It grated on his nerves how his environment was different from Lyle.

Furthermore, he heard that Lyle didn't have the qualification as heir, that he was disinherited and driven out from his house.

(I'm more amazing than that kind of guy. I'll absolutely become a son-in-law of a house of viscount and show how I'm better than that guy!)

Lionel was burning with rivalry toward Lyle—.

.

The formation ceremony of hippogriff subjugation force.

It was carried out by reserving a bar in the capital, but I who participated there wanted to go home quickly.

Even though there was only a few more days before the departure, the gathered lineup was terrible.

Standing on the speaker stage was the knight leading the subjugation force.

Ten-knight squad captain Norma Arnette.

She was a female knight with strong-willed face. She didn’t even try to hide her sour look when she saw the faces of the lineup.

She looked to be in the middle of her twenty or at her late twenty.

The middle aged male knight beside her, Morris Usher was pacifying her.

"Commander-dono, you should calmly greet them here."

"Morris, are you telling me to lead this kind of thugs and fight? I’m a Bahnseim Kingdom’s ten-knight squad captain! I won’t tell you to gather knights, but why can’t you gather trained soldiers?"

"No, that, even if you ask me something like that"

"That’s why you’ll be an average knight for eternity. You’re finally chosen as vice captain. Work seriously."

Morris-san was had plump and small stature. He was at his forty with small mustache on his face. He was being scolded by the female knight—a superior who was far younger than him.

It was a scene that invited pity.

"I, I’m sorry. But, I’m more or less a knight leader."

"You’re still undoubtedly lower ranked than me right!?"

"Ye, yes!"

The gathered people drank the prepared alcohol as they pleased and reached out to the food.

There was a lot of people but it was a crowd without order. The people’s gazes were gathered to the alcohol and food, and then to Norma-san, so I gripped my Jewel and talked to the ancestors.

"She seems unreliable."

The Fifth answered me.

[Ten-knight squad captain huh. If it’s the same with my era, then she is platoon commander or company commander class in the kingdom’s standard.]

The Second was calmly looking at the gathered personnel.

[That female knight’s subordinates are the unreliable knight leader and around ten knights huh? The rest only look like a mishmash group no matter how you see it. This is far more horrible than expected.]

The Sixth was also laughing at the excessive horribleness.

[This is terrible. Will these guys able to protect the town?]

Only the number was a lot.

Among the participants, it was Lionel who had gathered the most comrades.

He looked at me and made a triumphant look.

"No matter how I see it, this subjugation force look weak."

The Fourth was laughing.

[Lyle, this is how the world is. In the first place, the capable people would already find work since a long time ago and got promoted.]

The Third's opinion differed from the Fourth.

[If there are this many gathered, then there'll also be capable people among them. Even so, this lineup……somehow they only look like extra to make up the number.]

The requirement to join the subjugation force was to own the minimum equipment.

But, apparently this time even for applicants who didn't fulfill the requirements, all of them would be taken along too as logistical support. The people in this bar were around a hundred people who were formally recognized as soldiers.

If I just looked at the number then the scale of this force was big.

The Second seemed to be concerned about something.

[……There might be something behind the scene of this subjugation force.]

"Behind the scene?"

[Lyle, this isn't a game. To move this many people then a considerable amount of expenses will become necessary. If you consider that the logistical support personnel has to be paid too, don't you think that the money required will be great?]

The Fourth started talking with profit-and-loss calculation.

[This’ll sound cruel but, I don’t think that town is worth so much to have a force in this scale to be sent there. It’ll be best to reduce the number more and send the force swiftly. That’s if you’re thinking normally.]

The Seventh sighed deeply.

[How many people are they planning to send just for taking care of hippogriff? It will be harder to think that there is no ulterior motive behind this. The consideration of this isn’t a decent one.]

Thinking normally doing the subjugation this way was a mistake.

It couldn’t be helped if anyone wondered just what the higher-up was thinking.

"What’re they planning to do recruiting people until the very last minute?"

The Second answered with a cold voice.

[……These guys, they might be discarded.]

.

After the ceremony was over and I returned to the inn, there were Miranda-san and Aria-san at the lobby.

The two of them were making serious face for some reason.

"What’s the matter?"

"Oh, you’re early Lyle."

Miranda-san looked surprised when she turned around.

Aria-san asked me for confirmation.

"Hey, could it be the commander of the subjugation force is a female knight named Norma-san?"

I nodded.

"Could it be she’s your acquaintance?"

Aria-san shook her head.

"I heard the rumor while I was shopping but, that Norma person, she has bad reputation. It seems she is someone who’ll do unreasonable things in order to be promoted."

Miranda-san also looked troubled.

"I heard about it slightly from Renard but, it seems she is also disliked in the palace. Apparently her reputation is also bad among her fellow knights."

It seemed they were gathering information before our departure. It was something really appreciated for me as a leader.

"Well, certainly it felt like there would be problems with this subjugation."

"Really? Will it be alright like that?"

"……Who knows?"

"Lyle, get a hold of yourself. This is a request that you accepted."

I couldn’t say anything back.

I didn’t tell anyone around me about the existences of the ancestors. From the perspective of Aria-san, she must be finding it hard to understand why I was accepting this kind of request.

Miranda-san was looking apologetic.

"Lyle, you don’t need to force yourself for our sake. If you feel like it, you can simply take us and get out from Centralle. There is no need to properly go along with them."

I shook my head.

"I also have my own circumstances. This isn’t Miranda-san and Shannon’s responsibility."

While we were conversing like that, the situation inside the Jewel was strange.

The Third was muttering.

[Disliked female knight. And the gathered applicants are……isn’t this a hundred percent already? There is no doubt at all.]

The Fifth didn’t seem concerned.

[The opponent is hippogriff. Aren’t you overthinking it?]

The Sixth also had the same opinion, but it seemed he was more relaxed than usual.

[Yeah. The opponent is too lacking……well, it’s a harsh opponent for the dimwitted capital nobles though!]

Inside the Jewel, everyone laughed together hearing those words of the Sixth.

The hatred of these guys to the capital noble was deep.

After laughing the Seventh sighed.

[Haa……I can’t get motivated facing a mere hippogriff.]

It was me who was working, and in the first place hippogriff was a plainly troublesome opponent. I couldn’t understand the standard of the ancestors.

.

—Circry House’s mansion.

Ralph was talking with Renald in his office.

"So you failed in persuading Miranda."

"Yes. My apologizes. She is seriously in love with that young man."

Ralph was staring outside the window.

The voices of Lionel and others entering the mansion and starting an afterparty could be heard.

Ralph warped his face as though to say that the voices were offensive to his ear.

"In that case let her do as she please. In the worst case there’ll be no problem as long as Doris is still here. That Lionel brat also won’t be returning."

Renald turned his gaze on the table. The true request paper was placed on there.

"Doris too will open her eyes after the case this time. As for Miranda……honestly it’s a waste."

Miranda was capable even from Ralph’s eyes. If she was born as a male, he wouldn’t be worried with the problem of inheritance. It was vexing.

"She is similar with Milleia-sama. She had the grounding from the start."

"If she is similar with grandmother then it’s all the more regrettable. She should just be quiet and devote herself for this house’s sake."

Renald asked Ralph.

"Master, is it really alright?"

"Is there any problem?"

"Is it really alright to send the two Ojou-sama to that dangerous place? What will Milleia-sama, the previous heads, and the deceased madam think about this—"

"The dead cannot say anything to interfere. If they have anything to say then they can come out and tell me. I won't mind at all. That's right……the dead cannot say or do anything after all."

The face of his beloved wife came to Ralph's mind.

(That's right, if they can come here then I'll happily welcome them. It's because they can't do that—if, I can't meet her for the second time, then I'll just devote everything for the house's sake without thinking of anything else.)

Ralph listened to the offensive voices of the youngsters while making a cold gaze.

"With this the capital will also become slightly cleaner."

The dispatched subjugation force.

They were sent to a dangerous place—.

.

The number of subjugation force that exited the capital's rampart and gathered outside was around four hundred people.

If the knights riding on horse and wagons and the like were included, the scale of the force was really big.

What was concerning was the people who were present at the formation ceremony and yet weren’t here. ……It seemed they ran away.

What was different from before—when we went for dungeon subjugation as adventurer, was that there was no troupe of traveling performer and post exchange merchant coming along this time.

Why didn’t they come along? That was because the commander Norma-san disliked it. Because of that voices of dissatisfaction were coming from the soldiers.

I looked at my party.

At this place there were only me, Novem, Sophia-san, and Miranda-san.

Sophia-san looked over the subjugation force and said.

"This is……horrible."

Adventurers in their own way didn’t have any unity, but they would at least arrange proper equipment on their own. And yet, the group before us really didn’t have anything except the minimum necessary equipment.

If the top was Norma-san riding on a horse with full body armor and her knights, then the bottom of the barrel was the ordinary people bringing tattered armor and rusty weapon—they didn’t look like they could fight.

Even though we would have to move out soon, everyone was still talking idly without any coordination. That also lowered their evaluation.

The Second was irritated.

The Second hated something like this.

[Anyone is fine, just consolidate this bunch properly.]

We who brought the bare minimum baggage found Lionel and his groups. They were wearing uniform equipment among such disordered group.

Lionel was talking to Norma-san.

"Commander-dono, please take care of us!"

"……You have weapons and armors prepared. You also have wagon and supplies. Well, among these bunches you guys are at the better side I guess."

Norma-san seemed to be confirming the group that she would be leading. Her mood got slightly better.

She might be thinking that Lionel's group that had better equipment than normal soldiers looked like they would be useful.

The Third laughed at me.

[Oh, are you feeling annoyed Lyle? Well, but……I don't know what kind of method he used, however he has sufficient number of people and supplies. Lionel-kun is also capable huh.]

He didn't look like he had that much money. While I was thinking that, Miranda-san spoke beside me.

"Doris prepared those for him. But, it's curious that Otou-sama allowed that."

It seemed she knew that it was Doris-san who prepared those things.

And then, at the same time I also saw him giving something to Norma-san.

"Oh, he is even handing a bribe."

"Ee……"

I was astonished. The Fourth warned me.

[Lyle, something like that is also necessary for a smooth human relationship. Well, you should choose who to give the bribe to though, and his method is a bit unrefined. He should think more about where to hand that over, and if he don’t think about what to give then……]

The Fourth predicted that the one given the bribe in that way would think badly of the bribe giver. But,

"……You, giving me something like this……so you get it aren’t you!"

"She happily accepted!"

Norma-san left from there in a really good mood.

The Fourth was dumbfounded. Even the surrounding was the same.

[……E, eeeh?]

Lionel walked here wearing the equipment he was proud of.

He was grinning widely.

"Haha~, the commander has good eyes. She came to our spot but, she didn’t even take any notice to you. It really can’t be helped. Every last one of your party member is woman. Could it be, you’re planning to start a business here?"

Business—he didn’t say it clearly but, he must wanted to say whether I was bring around prostitutes.

Sophia-san was offended and she was going to say something back, but I stopped her.

"Uniform equipments and even horse cart, you’ve prepared a lot."

"I wish you won’t confuse me with a poor adventurer like you."

Miranda folded her arms and turned her gaze at Lionel.

"How high-spirited. Those are equipments gathered with my little sister’s money, so treat them carefully."

Lionel couldn’t argue back to that. He immediately left as though running away.

Sophia-san looked at his back.

"I met him before in the capital but, he is really, that’s……"

She was sending glances at me, so I immediately understood what she wanted to say.

"No, he is a stranger. Things like main house or branch house are irrelevant, we’re already stranger to each other."

"Ha, haa, I see."

Miranda-san was chuckling.

"They look similar. And yet the two of them are this different. It’s funny."

It seemed that I……no, Lionel looked similar with me.

While I was thinking that such thing wasn’t true, Novem cut into the conversation with a relatively scary face that didn’t look amused at all. She was a bit……scary.

"He isn’t similar with Lyle-sama at all."

Miranda-san made fun of Novem who was like that.

"Really? Their hair and pupils are the same color, besides his voice is also—"

"Where? Lyle-sama’s hair color is a very pretty blue. It’s different from the hair color with coloring that’s like it got mixed with strange color. Besides that person has no class. In addition his attitude is also unacceptable!"

Miranda-san was slightly creeped out.

I moved to stop Novem. After all she was starting to boast about me like"Lyle-sama is very wonderful—" with a loud voice.

"Novem, stop. Stop! Look, we need to prepare. Besides, Clara-san and the rest will arrives soon."

"No, allow me to say it. Just how wonderful Lyle-sama is!"

It was unusual that Novem was this excited, but I’m begging you, I wanted you to stop boasting about me so loudly.

Miranda-san was bewildered.

Sophia-san muttered.

"……Ah, there they are."

Ahead of Sophia-san’s gaze, Clara-san and the rest with the complete arrangements—came to pick us up in Porter.

While the surrounding were getting noisy, Eva-san who was riding on Porter’s roof was waving her hand.

"This is amazing! Lyle, this is really amazing~"

I let out a tired sigh before the departure.

.

The marching speed was basically not fast.

After all we were marching by walking.

In addition there were also the battles against the monsters we encountered.

Because the number of people moving was a lot, the encounters couldn’t be avoided and there was no other choice but fighting but…….

"Don’t come. DON’T COMEEEE!"

"Oi, get to the front! You get to the front!"

"Don’t screw around! You go forward!"

……What’s this, horrible.

Before the departure, the people who were saying things like ‘I’ll defeat the most monsters just you see!’ were scrambling to be the first to run away when the battle actually happened.

We got 400 people on our side.

The monsters didn’t even reach ten even at maximum.

Even now, several dozen people were surrounding just one orc, and yet they were getting cold feet without being able to do anything.

"Ah, seems someone is coming."

I heard the footsteps of horse and turned my gaze there.

The rushing knight was Morris-san. He readied the crossbow on his back on the horseback.

While I was watching that from Porter’s roof, Norma-san came from behind Morris-san with a displeased face.

The arrow that was fired from the crossbow pierced the hand of the armed orc.

Morris-san yelled.

"Commander!"

"Don’t yell for every little thing!"

Norma-san jumped from the horseback and drew out the sword on her waist. The thin double-edged sword was a one-handed sword and raised overhead. It was then swung down by making use of its falling speed.

The sword was enveloped in flame the moment it was swung down. The slashed orc was burning.

Aria-san and Eva-san were watching that together with me.

"That’s a flashy technique. Is that Art?"

"Isn’t it magic? Those knights like that kind of flashy technique. But, it’s making you excited so I like it. Don’t you somehow feel thrilled about female knight who control flame?"

"Ee~, it’s not thrilling. Because, that person, Morris-san is it? That person’s skill is more amazing."

"I recognize that but……other people don’t notice that."

Hearing that I watched the surrounding’s reaction. There were cheers but it was only Norma-san who got praised. There wasn’t anyone talking about Morris-san.

"That female knight is amazing."

"Perhaps we’ll be alright if she is the commander."

"At first I was anxious hearing that it’s Norma, but it’s a relieve if she’s that strong."

Morris-san wasn’t appreciated, however the person himself didn’t even look bothered about that. He was talking to Norma-san.

"That was splendid."

"There isn’t even any need for me to come out. After this take care of something like this by you all here. Come on, we’re going."

Eva-san evaluated Morris-san like this after seeing that exchange of the two.

"He is the type who is plain but can do his work. He’s the type who looks like a good person, but because of that he gets handicapped."

It seemed Aria-san couldn’t understand the surrounding’s evaluation.

"Why don’t Morris-san get appreciated? That person, perhaps he’s strong isn’t he?"

"Human evaluate in a way that is easy understand from what they saw. Isn’t it also the same in story? Rather than a person who is plain even though he is actually the one who should be appreciated, the star character—the flashy character is the one that is praised."

I watched the magic stone getting taken out from the orc. Morris-san was giving instruction for the work efficiently.

The Second sounded a bit happy.

[That kind of knight is valuable.]

The Third also joined the talk.

[A type who can do their work is important after all. Even the flashy battle just now, wasn't it a suggestion from Morris-kun too?]

I gripped the Jewel curious about what the Third meant. The Second explained to me.

[Look around. They're relieved because they understand Norma's strength right? He is teaching them that your commander here is strong see, like that.]

Was it not good if the commander wasn't strong?

From where I was standing, someone with good head and decisiveness would be more appreciated.

I could understand that it was better that they commander was strong rather than weak but……I thought it would be enough as long as they were strong enough to protect themselves.

[Lyle, you don't get it. Look around you. They're visibly relieved after seeing that battle. These guys don't have the eyes that can see through whether someone really can do their work or not.]

The Third also sounded displeased.

[It's troublesome because there is this. It can also be said that they are easy to handle though……now then, Lyle too should move soon I guess. At the next battle finish it with only your group.]

Being told that I concentrated. Inside my head the map of the surrounding and—dots with blue or yellow color could be seen.

It was the Arts of the Fifth and the Sixth.

For some reason, around me—the people around who weren't my party member, the subjugation force participants were harboring hostility at me. Why?

Other than them the yellow color was a lot.

A disunited group without any leadership……there was a gathering of red dots. I found them approaching here as though targeting this group.

[Oh, these guys seems right. Their number is quite a lot.]

The number of the red dots didn't reach twenty.

But, this was the greatest number among the monsters encountered until now.

They were good opponent to make us stood out.

.

—Norma was irritated.

The marching speed was slow. And above all else there was no order. In addition, most of the gathered participants didn't have fighting experience.

Most of them were jobless noble or commoner. They at least knew how to hold a weapon, but that was really all they knew. There were even some among them who couldn't do anything.

She guessed that there would also be capable talent among them, but on the whole they really couldn't be relied on at all.

(Compared to legitimate knights and soldiers, their quality is just too inferior.)

After much effort she was finally entrusted with this mission.

If she succeeded then she would undoubtedly get promoted, and yet the riffraff that was gathered were dragging her down.

Her gaze was also turning dangerous from the excessive irritation, so her subordinates also didn’t try talking to her.

During that time, there was a soldier running toward her.

"Commander! E, enemies!"

"Again! Why is so many monsters appearing this near to the royal capital!?"

Knight orders and soldiers were subjugating the monsters near the capital, but monster were attacking them right away when they got a little bit of distance from the city.

The soldier who came to report was flustered in front of Norma who was in a bad mood. Morris came forward to deal with it seeing that.

"Is the enemy monster, or bandit?"

"I, it’s monster."

"Their number?"

"E, err……I don’t know. But they’re definitely many."

A volunteer soldier who wasn’t trained couldn’t even make a satisfactory report. It increased Norma’s irritation even greater.

"You guys, come with me. We’ll take care of the monsters. Good grief, no matter who everyone is all useless."

She complained while deciding to head there personally because even further delay than this couldn’t be tolerated.

"E, err. But……it might be alright."

Vein pulsed on Norma’s forehead.

It made the messenger soldier turned pale.

"You……just what in the world are you saying!"

When Norma raised her angry yell, cheers welled up from some distance away.

"Wha, what? Oi, let’s go."

She spurred her horse. When she arrived there, there was a group fighting the monsters.

The group wasn’t surrounding the monsters using number. They were courageously challenging the monsters with fewer number.

No, instead they were the one who were on the offensive.

Morris was surprised, even so he checked the group’s background from his names register.

"They’re……adventurer it seems."

"Adventurer you say?"

A large snake that looked like it could swallow a human whole opened its mouth largely in intimidation. Its body had the width that was equal to an adult male, while its length surpassed twenty meter.

It slithered forward on the ground. When it raised its head, it was so big one had to look up to it.

A blue haired young man standing on its way. And then he slashed with the sabers in his both hands.

The large snake was cut down in a flash, then right away magic was attacking rapidly at the monsters who were trying to jump at the young man.

Norma and others who were trained knight and from noble—magician bloodline accurately comprehended that magic's power and precision. They couldn't hide their surprise.

(What……what are those guys!)

A black haired woman who was surrounded by orcs were cutting them down with her battle axe.

A red haired woman attacked the monsters trying to circle behind her allies, a green haired woman was tying up the monsters with strings that came out from her hand and immediately constricted them, choking the life out of them.

Perhaps the noise triggered something, because monsters were coming out one after another from the nearby forest.

But, even then they didn't look perturbed.

Norma asked in confirmation.

"There shouldn't be any renowned adventurers participating isn't it?"

"Ye, yes. But, they're young. So perhaps they're adventurers who'll become famous in the near future."

Hearing Morris's reply, Norma felt worried rather than acceptance.

(They're adventurers? Don't screw around. It's me who should be raising achievements. If I don't obtain achievements and get promoted……)

When she noticed the battle was over. Norma glared at the young man who was sheathing his sabers.

(Hm? That face……is that the guy who gave me the bribe? No, but his equipment is different.)

She thought whether he was the young man who handed her the bribe, but the equipment and party member were different so she decided that it was other person but……Norma thought that they looked really similar—.

.

After the battle.

Morris-san came here just as expected.

When he found me near the beheaded large snake, he came down from the horse and called out to me.

"I've watched the battle just now. That was amazing."

Morris-san praised me normally.

But, Norma-san who was staring over here from some distance away was obviously looking guarded.

The Third was laughing loudly inside the Jewel.

[How small. Norma-chan, you really have small caliber. You need to praise your subordinates more.]

I had known about Norma-san's small caliber from the start. As expected, it seemed she couldn't forgive anyone who was standing out more than her.

"Thank you very much."

"I heard that you're an adventurer, but I've never heard your name in the capital. Did you move here from somewhere?"

"We came from Arumsaas. We're only stopping by in the capital. We coincidentally received a request so we participated in the subjugation this time."

"Request?"

"Yes, it's a request from Circry House's head. Ah, I also have the proper written contract here."

It was curious that our participation wasn't told to the leader of this subjugation force.

When I showed the document, Morris-san was flustered.

"You're connected with a viscount house?"

"Well……something like that."

The Third spoke.

[Lyle, tell him, he is my father-in-law. Surely it will be amusing.]

The Second was exasperated.

[What use is there making any provocation here.]

Morris-san was sending glances at Norma-san.

"Aa~, that……I'll go to confirm with the commander, so can I ask you to collect the magic stones and materials for now?"

When I nodded, Morris-san hurriedly headed toward Norma-san with the written contract in hand.

There were gazes gathering on me so when I looked over there, among the cheering soldiers—there was Lionel looking at me with a really vexed look.

Chapter 70 – Past

The subjugation force arrived at Gioni two days later than scheduled.

Aria-san was dumbfounded seeing the town.

"The place is already battered."

The outer wall that was created by piling up stones was mostly crumbling with only a part of it remaining. The buildings too, the wooden buildings were burned, while the stone or brick buildings were destroyed.

The fields stretching out around the town were also devastated, it felt like the town, or more precisely the whole Gioni had been driven to a corner until a state of utter destruction.

But, there were still people remaining.

Seeing the subjugation force arriving, there were people hiding in the houses that were still barely remaining, and there were also people glaring at them. Frankly speaking it was hard to say that they were being welcomed.

Sophia-san looked down.

"……As I thought, we took too long to arrive here. It would be great if we rushed here quicker."

Sophia-san was a daughter of a feudal lord noble. She was born from a house that was only a house of vassal knight, but it was still a house of a small feudal lord.

She might be reminded of her birthplace.

Aria-san was feeling indignation.

"To begin with it’s wrong to take several weeks like this. It wouldn’t be like this if only the palace sent help right away."

"It’s just like Aria said. Besides, the gathered soldiers are also problematic."

The cause of the slow march in the first place was because of the participants lack of training.

I could hear the Second’s sigh.

[Lyle, silence the two of them. The one who is feeling truly frustrated is……the residence of this town.]

I warned the two of them whose tone was getting rougher.

"Both of you, it’s better to not say that right now. It’s the people of this town who are feeling frustrated."

When the two became quiet, the Fourth looked at the situation.

[People from the surrounding are also running away to here. They escaped to a town that has wall.]

The houses and buildings outside the wall were mostly destroyed completely. The fields were also devastated to a terrible degree.

The Fifth was questioning something.

[The situation is different from what we heard. ……If it’s like this, is it just like what we predicted?]

A person who seemed to be a higher-up of the town rushed out toward the arriving reinforcement.

The aging male was clinging on a horsed knight.

"Knight-sama, why didn’t you arrive quicker!?"

Norma-san made a gloomy face and didn’t answer.

In exchange Morris-san dealt with the man.

"Aa~, can I ask your name?"

"I’m called Patto. Even the magistrate had run away, while the other higher-ups either ran away or died in battle. There is only me remaining."

The higher-up who introduced himself as Patto seemed to be in charge of managing the craftsmen of the town.

There was one store in this small town. Other than that there were several buildings of the craftsmen.

It seemed there was also an inn, but it didn’t have the space for 400 people to stay there.

"We have come so it’s already safe. We have this many soldiers. We won’t lose against the like of hippogriff so rest assured—"

Then Patto-san’s complexion changed.

"Wha, what are you saying? The one leading the monsters is a “griffon”! The one leading more than a thousand monsters is a griffon!"

Patto-san’s scream made Norma-san who was disinterested until now to completely change.

She yelled angrily from the horseback.

"Idiot! I heard that it’s a hippogriff leading the monsters!"

"The, there’s no way it’s like that. Even the magistrate who ran away saw that it’s a griffon, the letter was also definitely mentioning that it’s a griffon!"

Even though they had risked their life sending the letter, the reinforcement that finally came thought that the enemy was a hippogriff.

Patto-san must want to cry right now.

Although, the feeling of wanting to cry was also the same with us subjugation force that thought our opponent would be a hippogriff.

It was a bolt from the blue.

.

—The royal capital.

In the palace, the nobles working in the palace including Ralph were meeting.

Everyone was baron or viscount, and each of them had a post as elite bureaucrat.

The lineup gathered inside a room in the palace were talking about the true objective of dispatching soldiers to Gioni.

"The case this time is just the right chance."

A fat baron began the talk with that sentence. The surrounding was also making a small laugh together in satisfaction.

"The monsters are also really thoughtful."

"With this the capital will also become slightly cleaner."

"It’s just the right chance to decrease the number."

They had grasped the fact that it was a griffon attacking Gioni and not a hippogriff since the beginning.

The report of the magistrate running away from the town and the request that was sent to the palace by risking the messenger’s life informed them that fact. They knew it, and made use of it.

Ralph opened his mouth.

"After the subjugation force is annihilated and the town destroyed, we’ll dispatch the knight order as the actual subjugation force. If there is anyone who you wish to become independent, please make them participate. It will be a chance to obtain achievement that allow them to become independent."

The desired for the subjugation force to be annihilated.

The reason was because they wanted to decrease the number of house of noble in the lowest rank.

A baron nodded with a smile.

"I’m thinking to make the second son in my place to go independent. I’ll make him raise achievement in the subjugation this time so he can has his own house."

If the subjugation force was annihilated, it was something that might become a shame for Bahnseim Kingdom, but in the first place the griffon was attacking a territory under the direct control of the royalty.

There was no feudal lord who would complain, and there would be no problem if the griffon was subjugated by the knight order in regular army.

Rather, the knight order’s reputation would increase because they subjugated such dangerous monster that had annihilated one subjugation force.

For the people in this place, the current subjugation force and the place called Gioni only had that much value. There would be damage, but they thought that it wouldn’t be a particularly great loss.

The territory of the kingdom was vast. With the lost of Gioni, the damage numerically wouldn’t be really much.

"I wonder if there will be people who deserted."

"There might be some but, it’s unthinkable that the griffon will let them go."

"IF they return to the capital, we can just judge them as deserting in the face of the enemy."

They didn’t mind even if the knights and soldiers—and the volunteers they sent there were gone.

A lot of noble house would vanish from the case this time. Like that new nobles would be born using the opened up spots.

Ralph matched his smile with the surrounding.

(With this the nuisance brats will also vanish. If Doris can marry with the right person later, this problem will also be taken care of.)

Sending away the unnecessary people altogether, that was how they were thinking of this—.

.

In a half-destroyed private house within the town of Gioni.

We parked Porter beside it and started preparing to camp.

Shannon talked to me.

"Hey, why is everyone relieved when it was hippogriff, and then depressed when it’s griffon?"

I was exasperated at Shannon’s question.

Certainly hippogriff was troublesome but it wasn’t undefeatable.

However, griffon was extremely dangerous.

"……You, what do you think a griffon is?"

"It’s similar with hippogriff isn’t it? I know because I saw it in a picture. They’re like relative right?"

Certainly the two monsters were similar.

They were both monster with eagle head and wings.

But, griffon had—a body of lion instead of horse. Their size was also bigger than hippogriff. They were ferocious and also smart. A dangerous monster.

If someone defeated a griffon, they would be treated as hero.

There was how great the difference between the two monsters……it would be fine to think of griffon as hippogriff’s superior version.

I explained about griffon, but Shannon didn’t seem to understand.

"……They’re relative just as I thought isn’t it?"

"I’m telling you they’re similar but different. Or rather, you only saw the picture but didn’t read the words huh. I’ll tell on you to Miranda-san later."

"Wait. Don’t tell Onee-sama. I’ll give you candy so wait!"

Shannon begged with tearful eyes. Shannon couldn’t see from her birth so she couldn’t read letter. But, now that she became able to see she was in the middle of studying to read and write.

She should be punished for skipping her study.

"No good."

"Uu~……Lyle you idiot!"

"I’m fine with being idiot. But, it’s you who’ll be scolded."

When I sent her a smug smile, Shannon was,

"That face, somehow it looks exactly like Doris-oneesama’s boyfriend. That guy is also a gigolo as expected after all. You two are completely like each other."

"What did you say!"

Shannon ran away when I got angry.

I sighed.

The matter of Shannon was of course a problem, but right now there was a mountain of problem that should be prioritized.

The morale of the subjugation corpse had dropped rock bottom. In addition, the faces of the townspeople toward such subjugation force were filled with disappointment.

Norma-san declaring right away to retreat was also really bad.

There were also some who agreed, but Morris-san somehow stopped it, which led to now.

There was no way to win against griffon. That was why talking about running away wasn't mistaken but……thinking of our position, that was a bad move.

The palace should be waiting for us to run away.

It was also fine if we were annihilated. It was fine even if the town was destroyed. It was fine even if we ran back. If we ran back to the capital, surely they intended to make up excuse and executed us.

Morris-san had guessed various things from how the palace was giving us false information.

Bluntly speaking it was fine to say that the situation was the worst.

But—.

[Griffon. With this Lyle too will become a full adult huh.]

[Griffon, nice!]

[I want to obtain the materials and magic stone. They will fetch a really high price.]

[I didn't get many chance and could only bring down two when I was alive.]

[As expected griffon extermination cannot be missed for a man! Lyle, you're lucky!]

[Stuffing. Let's stuff it. Let's make the griffon Lyle defeated as stuffed animal for decoration!]

—The mood of the ancestors was horrible.

For Walt House that seldom got the chance for dragon subjugation, griffon subjugation was treated as proof of adulthood.

That's not it. It's wrong. This is wrong.

Thinking with common sense, a griffon was something at the level where you had to resolve yourself to die when something like that came out.

The Second sounded frustrated.

[If Lyle can take command, then he should be able to bring it into one-on-one. However, if it's Norma in command then it'll be difficult isn't it?]

The Sixth denied that opinion.

[On the opposite there's also the possibility of Lyle's group getting pushed aside. Well, she's an idiot who tried to run away in this situation, so isn't that possibility be the higher one? —Hm?]

Suddenly the Sixth's attitude changed.

It seemed he had familiarity with the surrounding scenery.

[This scenery, it feels like I've seen it somewhere……if I remember right……come to think of it, when speaking of Gioni there was a small village at my era……]

[What's with you? Perhaps you once came here in the past?]

The Fifth addressed him, so the Sixth spoke after a pause.

[……ah]

It seemed he recalled something, but suddenly he fell silent. The ancestors also got curious seeing the Sixth like that and pressed him with questions. But, the Sixth wouldn't open his mouth.

Aria-san came to where I was.

"Lyle, I found someone who will show us around the town."

"Thank you very much. A local person is valuable after all."

It would be a great difference whether we had a guide or not.

Anyway there wouldn’t be any way to form a plan without studying the current situation.

Aria-san scratched her head.

"No, I don’t know how I should say it but……come here, give your greeting."

Hiding behind Aria-san was a really small kid.

His age might be around six or seven I guessed?

"Could it be you’re the guide?"

The kid nodded nervously.

He had tanned skin. The scratch on his exposed skin stood out.

"Most of the men are……. This kid, when he heard me talking, he said that he is a son of hunter. It seems he know a lot about this area from his father’s talk."

"Err……that’s"

I was at a loss for words. The inside of the Jewel was completely silent must be because they had realized just how severe the present situation was without a doubt. I was thinking so.

The kid bowed at me.

"Ni, nice to meet you. My name is Luka. I’ll do my best so please hire me."

I intended to prepare reward for the guide, but I never even imagined that a kid this young would come.

While I was worrying about what to do, the Second and the Third were—.

[……Dewy]

[Dewy-niisan……how]

They muttered a different name from “Luka” with a sad voice.

.

The kid’s name was Luka.

His father who was a hunter died. He took the request to become a guide to earn money even just for a bit. The remaining male labor were gathered by the subjugation force under Norma-san’s lead, so we couldn’t find anyone else except Luka.

It seemed that the Second’s son and the Third’s big brother—Dewy had very similar appearance with him.

However, the two of them were reluctant to speak about the circumstance.

It was a relief that the voices inside the Jewel were quiet.

I walked behind Luka.

"Over here, Lyle-sama."

"Lyle-sama……you can call me without honorific."

"Tha, that’s no good. Kaa-san told me, if I’m receiving money then I have to do my work properly."

He was a laudable boy who was trying to protect his mother in the place of his dead father.

Seeing his back figure made me felt ashamed myself.

I had no memory of when I was his age. It was really vague.

If I was asked whether I was as earnest as him at that time……I had no confidence. Frankly speaking, he was even more levelheaded than the me a little while ago. Yes, compared to the me when I left from the house, this boy was definitely more levelheaded to a marked degree.

Not just showing the way, he even knew in detail about which wall had broken or which part was brittle.

"This part is repaired every time, but it will break right away."

"Ri, right."

"The bridge here is fragile, so it'll be dangerous when several adults are crossing it."

"Ye, yeah."

"Over here—"

"Ye, yep."

When I asked, it seemed he was knowledgeable from helping his father and playing in the town. It was great that I was able to learn various things, but somehow I ended up feeling really down from comparing myself with him.

This boy, he might be more dependable than me.

After we finished looking around the town, the sun was already setting.

At first I wondered if one silver coin would be alright but……my gratitude to Luka who was doing his best and thinking of his living from here on, I handed him three silver coins.

"Is it alright for me to receive this many?"

"It’s fine, just take it. Your mother……take care of her."

"Yes!"

I saw off the boy who was going home while waving his hand energetically, then I returned to where my party members were staying.

.

—The city’s inn.

The knights and the men of the town gathered there.

There was also Lionel’s figure among them.

Everyone was disheartened. The more they listened to the present situation, the more they learned how bad the situation was. Their complexion was also bad.

Lionel was terribly flustered inside his heart.

(Lies. Something like this is absolutely a lie. Because, they said that it’s a hippogriff! Even though I heard that it’ll be alright because there’s a ten-knight squad leader with us!)

Where did the information become awry?

Perhaps the townspeople were lying, or there was a misunderstanding. He thought that several times but, when he listened at the damage of the town and the surrounding area, it was unthinkable that it was a lie.

Norma was also looking pale while only listening.

Morris was continuing the talk in her place.

"Several hippogriffs are obeying the griffon?"

"That’s right! Don’t make me say it over and over!"

The attitude of the townspeople was also getting worse. That was because the knights they thought were coming to help were unreliable.

"How many hippogriff?"

"You think I know. We once saw four at the same time. But, as for their accurate number……"

The men of the town. And then the men who escaped here from the surrounding area.

Many of the people who fought bravely died, while the remaining people almost had no willpower left to fight.

Lionel tried to ask his question, but then,

"I, it’s bad! The griffon is outside!"

When everyone hurriedly rushed out, there was a griffon swooping down on the town’s outer wall and looked down at Lionel and co.

When they looked up to the sky, there were six silhouettes in the evening glow that seemed to be hippogriffs.

(Hu, huge.)

Lionel was surprised by the griffon’s size. Although the outer wall wasn’t as big as the royal capital’s wall, he still needed to look up at it. But that wall looked small with the griffon standing on it.

The griffon opened its mouth broadly as though it was smirking, then it spread open its large wings and flew away.

It led the hippogriff and went away to the distance.

(Sca, scary……that’s a griffon.)

A monster that came out in story and fairy-tale. Those who defeated it would be called hero. In front of such monster, Lionel’s body was paralyzed and couldn’t move.

It seemed Norma was also in the same state.

She fell from her knees and then she held her head.

"I once heard about it. When Griffon is enjoying the hunt……it’s over. We’re going to get toyed around by that monster before getting killed."

When the commander lost their nerve, it would quickly spread to the whole army.

"Commander, just what are you saying! We have to immediately act in order to take countermeasure, or else we’ll really get killed!"

Morris reached out to make her stood up, but Norma slapped away that hand and yelled.

"You’re idiot! Only the elite even among the knight order can face that monster! How are we going to face it with this kind of mishmash group and battered city!?"

Norma held his head and started crying on the spot.

Seeing her like that, Lionel thought.

(I gotta run. I can’t die in this kind of place. Even though I finally obtained a chance. I need escape to a safe place and aim at the next chance to marry into the family.)

Lionel was leaving that place with an unsteady gait—.

.

Night.

We were eating dinner around a bonfire. When we finished,

As expected it seemed everyone was also shocked that a griffon showed up. But, the ancestors had been mentioning how this request was suspicious from the beginning, so my heart was somewhat composed.

"The opponent is griffon huh."

Aria-san responded to my muttering.

"How can you act that calm!? It’s like we are deceived here!"

Clara-san corrected Aria-san’s opinion.

"No, we are deceived for real. I heard that the magistrate ran away and reported to the palace. I also heard that the request the town sent also reached the palace. The palace should know about the correct state of this case."

There was no doubt that they knew. With that many things could be explained. How someone hated became the captain, and the disordered mishmash of nobles and soldiers.

Aria-san was dumbfounded.

"……Just why are they doing something like this."

I also felt the same. But, it was the current palace that was wishing for this.

Clara-san looked at me.

"We don’t have the equipment to face griffon. Lyle-san, have you considered retreating?"

Clara-san calmly spoke the pertinent opinion as an adventurer. In respond, Aria-san stood up.

"Wait! Are you saying to abandon the people here!?"

"……It'll be ideal to save everyone, but we also should understand that we aren't strong enough for that."

"But……such thing……"

Warm drink was poured into the cup I received after the meal.

The steam could be seen clearly in the night's cold air.

I put the cup on my mouth and took a sip.

Shannon was in a dither while looking for help at Miranda-san.

"Onee-sama, can't something be done?"

"As expected it's impossible to rally back from this state. Besides everyone don't have the motivation."

Eva-san was also sitting down.

"Griffon is it……I cannot see how we can manage it somehow with our current lineup. Or rather, it's your father who gave this request wasn't it? He will do this kind of foul play toward his daughters?"

Miranda-san crossed her legs and placed her elbow on her knee. She placed her chin on her hand. Her figure when answering Eva-san's question looked somewhat annoyed.

"He is that kind of parent. At this point it also become clear the reason he tried to detain me from coming. That guy, he planned to kill Lyle here. ……He is really a pathetic guy."

That guy, she must mean Ralph-san. She called her own parent as that guy……but, no one was able to reproach her that she said too much.

Gazes gathered on Shannon who fell into silence.

The one asked to stay behind was only Miranda-san……I understood that Ralph-san’s thinking was focused on his house but, like this it was just too pitiful for Shannon.

Sophia-san asked Eva-san.

"Is there any legend that might be useful? Like the way the heroes defeated the griffon."

"It’s troubling even if you ask me. It’ll be a different story if I’ve seen it directly but, in the first place legend or song has some exaggeration in them."

"I, is that so."

Sophia-san was in a low spirit.

Monica was just like usual.

"I will manage somehow if it’s one-on-one though. As expected flying is unfair. Even I cannot fly without supplemental equipment."

……This fellow, she’s useless when it’s crucial.

Novem was looking at me, waiting for my word.

The inside of the Jewel was completely silent since some time ago. I was troubled of what to do. From the reaction of the ancestors, there must be a way to fight griffon.

However, they didn’t say anything right now.

Could it be they were testing me?

"Anyway let’s rest for now. They said that the griffon only came for reconnaissance after all, even if we’re running away it’ll be too dangerous to do it at night."

We decided the night watch turn and then slept.

I sent my consciousness inside the Jewel.

.

Inside the Jewel.

The Third was talking with the Second with an unusually serious face. The other ancestors were watching that quietly.

[They look similar.]

[To think that we would meet a kid who looks exactly like Dewy-niisan. I never even dreamed about that.]

Originally it was Dewy-san who should become the third head of Walt House.

The Second talked with a complicated expression that looked slightly sad and also happy.

[It wouldn’t be strange for a kid with similar appearance to exist somewhere but, I wonder if this is what they called fate.]

The Third also nodded a bit.

[Isn’t this good? If the Second vanished early, you wouldn’t be able to meet with Luka-kun. Lyle only came here by coincidence but, with this Luka-kun can be saved.]

[You’re right. I want to save him.]

Dewy-san died before he became the head of the house.

Because of that, the second say Sleigh inherited the house.

It wasn’t a guarantee that the eldest son would always inherit the house safely.

That was why, people had more than one son.

However, the increased number of children sometimes would also quarrel for the headship of the family.

Fortunately something like that never happened in Walt House. No, if such thing occurred, then surely the house wouldn’t be able to grasp its current glory.

I who couldn’t inherit that glory didn’t have any right to say anything though.

The Second looked at me.

[It’s mysterious.]

"E, err……yes."

I could guess that something must have happened. Dewy-san died and the Third became the heir. Even I could guess that.

But, I didn’t know the detail.

[……It’s also awkward to keep it unclear like this.]

When the Second said that, the Third scratched his head.

[You’re right. We want Lyle to do his best after all. We should tell him the reason.]

The reason why the Second and the Third were fixated to the boy named Luka.

The Third straightened his posture.

[It’s not like there was a complicated circumstance. But, I want Lyle to know. About our feeling.]

The Second stood up.

[Lyle, come with us for a bit.]

.

The Second’s memory room.

Even though usually it was sunny, it was raining only for today. Furthermore the rain was a heavy one. The visibility was poor.

When I spread my hands, I could only see the rain but unable to touch it. But, there was certainly the sensation of stepping on muddy ground.

The mud splashed when I walked, but my clothes didn’t get dirtied. This was a memory room.

The sensation of not getting wet under a heavy rain was a strange feeling.

The Second was walking in front of me.

The fierce rain and the bad visibility would make me lose sight of the second if I didn’t focus.

"Did something happen?"

[You’ll understand if you follow me.]

The Second was a man of few words. We walked until a certain place wordlessly and then stopped.

[This isn’t just my memory. Sleigh—the Third’s memory is also mixed in. It’s something that I have never seen before until now.]

The Jewel was a mysterious item.

When the Second stopped walking, he started talking about that day.

[That day I promised to Dewy and Sleigh—to the two of them. I promised to see their bow training. But, I left the mansion because of a sudden business. The weather was good at the morning, but from the afternoon it was raining heavily when I returned.]

Perhaps it was an unforgettable day for the Second. He remembered even the small details. It seemed he felt bad toward his sons and brought present for them.

[When I returned, the people in the mansion were panicked because the two of them hadn't returned home. Everyone was searching around for them, yelling to each other where they had gone. I thought that perhaps they remembered the promise and rushed out.]

I could hear the talking voices inside the heavy rain.

When I turned my gaze toward the voices, there were two children there.

And then……a one-horned rabbit with a horn jutting out from its forehead was lowering its head and raising its butt high in a preparation stance to jump anytime.

[Nii-chan!]

A soaked wet blonde haired boy was crying. He must be the young Third.

The other boy was Luka—no, the boy was really similar but it must be Dewy.

[Sleigh, get behind Nii-chan! I, it'll be fine.]

A one-horned rabbit entered the village.

Perhaps it was a trivial monster if it was against an adult, but it was a threat from the perspective of two children.

Dewy readied his training bow.

[I, I'm not going to let you harm my little brother!]

The boy was dependable even though he was still so young, but the one-horned rabbit was seething with killing intent. I couldn't bear watching and took a step forward to do something, but the Second lost his self-control earlier than me and rushed out to stand in front of the one-horned rabbit. However, the one-horned rabbit passed through the Second—jumping at Dewy.

The sharp horn stabbed the chest of the still young boy.

Sleigh cried out loudly. Dewy was struggling in anguish. I couldn't touch him even when I reached out. It was impossible to touch him.

The Second's face looked like he was going to cry.

The one-horned rabbit didn't stop. It pulled out its horn and aimed at Sleigh this time.

The instant it jumped toward him.

Inside the rain, a sharp arrow pierced the one-horned rabbit's body.

It didn't stop with just one. Several arrows stabbed the one-horned rabbit's body. The force of the arrows changed the direction of the one-horned rabbit's body midair. It then fell on the ground and stopped moving.

When I looked at the direction the arrow came from, the Second—Crassel's figure holding a bow was there.

Crassel hurriedly ran closer. Sleigh was crying while pleading to him.

[Nii-chan. Nii-chan is!]

Crassel hugged Dewy's body.

The blood overflowing from his chest was mixing with rain while flowing to the ground.

[Dewy!? Oi, Dewy!!]

He called to him, but Dewy's gaze was blank and he only moved his mouth slightly. His words couldn't be heard because of the rain and Sleigh's crying voice.

Crassel placed his hands on Dewy's chest to stop his bleeding, but blood was flowing rapidly from between his fingers.

[It's fine. I'll bring you to the mansion right away. Kaa-sanmother is waiting there. Your Baa-changrandmother too—even your Jii-changrandfather is waiting for you.]

I could do nothing except watching this scene.

The wound was obviously fatal from a glance.

The panicked Crassel called at Dewy many times but there was no reply.

The small life vanished in his arms…….

[I'm sorry I didn't make it in time. It must be hurt. It must be tough. ……I'm really sorry.]

He strongly and gently hugged him, and then he loudly cried and shouted toward the sky.

The Second looked embarrassed seeing himself.

[……It was really pathetic. It makes me hate myself.]

"Tha, that’s not"

Before I finished speaking, the Second shook his head.

[It’s my own responsibility of being unable to protect Dewy. It would be okay if only I kept my promise.]

The children who were gone to practice bow.

The rain fell so they took shelter from rain, but it didn’t stop even after waiting for a while so they tried going back to the mansion even if they got wet from it.

While they were running under the rain unable to see well because of it, Sleight crashed on a one-horned rabbit.

Watching Crassel and Sleigh crying, I realized what kind of feeling the two of them had when seeing Dewy’s figure overlapping on Luka.

And then the reason why the First until the Third were hating one-horned rabbit also became clear. I was puzzled why they hated that monster so much but, I understood after knowing the reason.

……I also somehow understood why the three of them didn’t speak of the reason clearly. Surely they didn’t want to touch the happening of this day. No, perhaps they were unable to bring themselves to touch it.

"Second, I—"

[……I’m changing the scenery.]

The Second’s words cut me off.

When the rain stopped, the scenery changed to grey color. It was slowly changing color to a different scenery. When color returned to the scenery, it was a bow training place.

There a smiling Crassel was teaching bow to Dewy and Sleigh.

It seemed he made small bows for use of children and the two of them were practicing using those.

Dewy hit the target with his arrow.

The distance was short and it wouldn't be hard to hit the target, but Crassel looked happy.

[You did great, Dewy!]

[Yep!]

On the other hand, Sleigh couldn't do it well so it looked like he wanted to cry. Seeing that, Crassel ran to him in panic and talked to him.

[Sleigh, hold your bow more firmly. Right, like that……no good huh.]

Sleigh who couldn't do it well looked at his big brother Dewy and cried.

[Let's work harder, Sleigh.]

[……yes]

The Second was looking at that scene with a sad smile.

[Sleigh was obedient. You wouldn't be able to imagine it right now but, he was always following behind Dewy and playing. Dewy was honest and kind. He was also taking care of Sleigh often because he

was the big brother. Perhaps……this was the time when I was the most happiest.]

Crassel who was having fun teaching bow and the children training diligently.

[I was awkward after all. I didn’t understand they way to play. My father was like that after all, I couldn’t remember what he did for me at my childhood.]

The First. Basil, even from my standpoint he was an awkward person.

I didn’t know if he ever played properly with his child.

The Second looked back at me.

[Lyle……I don’t want to see that kid die. I also understand that he isn’t Dewy but, this is a request from me.]

He was saying that he wanted me to protect Luka.

I silently nodded and looked at Dewy’s figure.

He looked similar with Luka. No, I guess it was Luka who looked similar with Dewy.

The Second scratched his head in embarrassment.

[I really didn’t want to show myself looking like that.]

"They why are you showing me now?"

[……Well, for various reasons. If I’m going to ask for a favor, then I believe that I also have to explain the reason.]

The Second’s face turned serious.

[Say, I’m changing the topic but……. You, actually can use my Art can’t you?]

I became unable to look at the Second’s face hearing those words. I felt my gaze wandering around.

[I’m not blaming you. Certainly I was angry several times but……I got the feeling that you failed on purpose.]

"……It’s true that I was unable to do it."

[Really?]

When I fell silent, the Second smiled slightly.

[You, you made the same reaction like Sleigh.]

When I lifted my head, the surrounding scenery started changing once more.

This time it seemed that several years had passed.

Sleigh had grown.

But, his hand was holding a sword instead of a bow.

Crassel was making a troubled face.

[Sleigh, do you hate bow?]

Sleigh looked down and wouldn’t look at Crassel’s face. And then, his gaze wandered.

[……I don’t hate it. It’s just I’m not good using it. I’m just training using sword which I’m good with.]

Seeing Sleigh making the same reaction like me made me felt embarrassed for some reason.

If he was honest Crassel wanted him to train using bow, but the obstinate Sleigh was swinging sword in training.

The Second watched that scene while,

[Thinking back now……Sleight might be dragging along that day with him all this time.]

Perhaps he would be able to protect his big brother if he brought a sword instead of a bow?

I didn’t know whether he was thinking like that, but Sleigh wouldn’t even look at bow anymore since he lost his big brother.

Chapter 71 – The Worst Man

I opened my eyes and woke up, then I went outside and checked the city's situation.

The town was already just a step before total destruction. The next time the monsters attacked it felt like they would lose. No, they would definitely lose.

I looked up to the sky.

"Even if there is wall there won't be any way to defend if the monster fly in the sky."

How to fight an army of monsters that was under the command of a griffon?

I tried thinking it but, as I thought we wouldn't be able to protect the town with just us.

Even if we repelled the monsters, it would be meaningless if the town was destroyed after that.

The victory that I should aim at was protecting the city, defeating the griffon, and returned triumphantly to the capital. If I couldn't manage that, I wouldn't be able to get payback at the fellows at the capital.

He sent his daughter to this kind of place. No, it was me who brought them here but, he didn't stop Shannon……well, no matter. Anyway, I wanted to deal a blow at that Ralph bastard who sent to me to this dangerous place.

To do that, number was essential as expected.

"Before I made the whole logistical support as my ally but, this time it won’t be good unless I make everyone my ally huh. But as expected that’ll be hard."

There was a lot of thing to do.

While I was pondering of what to do, the bad fellows inside the Jewel who had recovered their liveliness called out to me.

[You’re troubled huh, Lyle.]

[It’s in time like this you should rely on us. This is our specialty.]

[That’s right. Let’s work hard in order to defeat the griffon and become famous.]

[First it’s manpower.]

[Muh! I get a good idea! Lyle, leave it to me.]

[It will be the time for a fun hunting. Lyle, let’s start preparing.]

I got a headache.

The ancestors were joyfully looking forward to the griffon subjugation while the surrounding was in despair.

"Is there a way? It’ll be meaningless if we only defeat the griffon."

The Second was also recovering his liveliness.

[Obviously. It’s only natural to protect the town.]

The Sixth was advising me joyfully.

[First you should secure manpower. Griffon is smart. It seems that yesterday it also came for reconnaissance, but those guys has a habit to play around.]

Play, it might not be accurate to call it like that but, smart monster like griffon would sometimes toy around with their prey.

This situation was also like that.

It must be cornering the townspeople slowly and hurting them bit by bit. From the story of Patto-san, if the monsters got serious from the start then a town of this size should be destroyed right away.

"Even if we gather manpower, the quality of the people who came with us is questionable. Even the people remaining in this town are unclear whether they'll be able to fight or not."

In this town there was almost no decent male help remaining.

Their morale was low, their experience shallow, and the town was battered.

It already looked like a checkmate.

"I don't really want to say it but, won't it be better to take Luka and his mother and run away?"

The Second instantly denied that.

[That's no good. Will you look after them for your whole life? Besides……don't think that a kid and a mother like them will be able to live properly if they go to other place.]

The Sixth also had the same opinion.

[Exactly. Also I can't recommend running away to you. After all from the perspective of the griffon, a lot of prey has just arrived. It won't let any get away—it's persistent you know?]

.

—A slight distance away from the town.

Lionel who was riding on a horse cart was telling his comrades.

"Hurry! Hurry and run away!"

They were walking while watching the surrounding fearfully in order to escape together back to Centralle.

They left the town before dawn. Now the day was entering noon.

"No way we'll win against them with sword or spear."

"Damn it. Damn it……Even though it was finally a chance for promotion."

"Even though they said that you can obtain success just by coming along!"

Lionel yelled.

"You guys, do you want to die! Run away quickly!"

The youths walking outside the horse cart talked back to Lionel hearing that.

"Don't talk when you ride on the horse cart alone damn you! Then how about you also come down and walk huh!"

"Thi, this is a loan from Doris. Besides, if we throw away the horse cart then we won't be able to bring the food too!"

It became an argument between themselves and they stopped walking. It was then.

The sunlight was suddenly blocked and created a shadow.

One of them looked up and then dropped his spear.

"Oi, don't throw the weapon away. Even that is a loan……wha, what's the matter?"

Lionel raised his face and a voice"Hih!" escaped his throat.

What blocked the sun and created shadow was a hippogriff.

It looked down at Lionel and his friends, and then it lifted its face to cry loudly. Its cry echoed and hurt the ears of Lionel and others on the ground with how loud it was.

One of them yelled.

"O, oi!"

Without them noticing, the figures of monsters were appearing around them.

The road they were walking on got blocked, and monsters also appeared from their left and right.

The hippogriff swooped down and trampled one of them. Its front legs were the legs of bird. One of them was stepped on, grabbed by the legs, and he spewed out blood from his mouth.

"He, help—me"

They could hear the sound of flesh and bone getting crushed. His comrades couldn’t even flinch back.

The horse that was pulling the cart rampaged from feeling great terror. The hippogriff bit the horse’s neck with its beak.

Lionel who was watching that scene from the cart was,

"HiiYAAAAA!!"

He yelled that and jumped down from the cart, then he ran away at full speed.

When his friends followed after him and started escaping, the monsters chased them. One of them got overtaken by a fast monster that looked like dog and fell behind.

"Don’t leave me! Help. Help—!"

Lionel stripped the armor he wore and threw it away while running. His comrades also imitated him and threw away their weapon while running.

They turned back on the road they came from, and then when they finally arrived at the walled town……the number of his comrades had been reduced to five—.

.

There were people who escaped from the city.

When I heard that it was Lionel, I almost complained just what the hell that guy was doing. But, the Third told me[Eh? Lyle also spoke about running away right?] with a lot of sarcasm so I closed my mouth.

But, the problem was the fact that there were people who ran away, and the fact that they failed in doing that were coming to light at the same time.

It was a bad news for the townspeople and the subjugation force.

Lionel and his friends who threw away their equipment and ran back here were sitting on the ground of the plaza.

Novem was looking at them coldly.

"Does Novem hate Lionel? No, I also don’t like him though."

"I don’t hate him. But, I don’t have any like for him."

It was a tricky answer. However, it was also rare for Novem to reject an individual to this degree.

Morris-san was asking the opinion of Norma-san.

"At this rate we also cannot escape. Commander, we should resolve ourselves."

"Re, resolve? What resolve! I don't want. Who……who will want to die at this kind of place! Tha, that's right. Morris, you become bait! I'll report this situation to the capital. Ye, yeah. That's right. That's good. If I do that, it won't be running away. I'm alone will be saved."

Perhaps she was deranged, Norma-san didn't even try to hide that she wanted to get saved alone. She didn't even think what would her subordinates who heard that thought of her.

The Fifth muttered.

[……Let's kill her.]

I gripped the Jewel. The Seventh explained to me.

[No matter what we're going to do, Norma right now is nothing but a hindrance. Listen, Lyle……the case of getting killed by your ally in battlefield is not rare. An incompetent commander will expose the whole army to danger. Don't you think it'll be better for such commander to be gone?]

Looking at the deranged Norma-san, certainly it was unthinkable that she would be able to take command properly.

Morris-san forcefully led Norma-san away and the crowd dispersed.

The Third was calm.

His tone was colder than usual.

[Morris-kun might be unable to decide by himself. He has indecisiveness in him, at this rate this town will be annihilated without being able to resist any. It's also unthinkable that Norma-chan will hand over her right to command……then, we can only have her die.]

No no, even without going that extremely……when I thought until there, the Fourth seemed to notice and harshly talked to me instead.

[Lyle, that's just how important the position of commander is. Sometimes they also have to order their subordinate to die. They receive that much authority and reward, and yet if they're unable to be useful when it's time then it's out of the question. If you wish for promotion and sought a befitting position then resolve is necessary. An incompetent who can't do that will only be harmful if they're promoted. Lyle, kindness is virtue, but the choice of not killing means telling everyone here to die just for the sake of Norma alone.]

The Fifth was also harsh.

[Norma who is seeking a position that is beyond her means is in the wrong. Well, she is sent here because she is someone like that. Lyle, she'll die anyway even if you don't do it. Erase her for the sake of the future.]

Norma-san would never hand her right to command to me. That was the judgment of the ancestors. Besides, the whole army couldn't be brought together with Norma-san here.

I understood what they were saying. I understood but…….

"……Novem, I'm going to talk to Norma-san."

Novem nodded.

"Yes, Lyle-sama."

Inside the Jewel, everyone said that I’m lacking resolve in exasperation.

.

With Novem in tow, I headed to the inn that was turned into Norma-san’s lodging.

The matter of Lionel became known in the blink of eye. It made the townspeople and the soldiers to feel gloomy and depressed.

A middle aged man sitting on the side road was complaining in low mutters.

"They said it was a hippogriff. Even though……even though I wanted to be successful in life and made her live in comfort."

At another spot volunteer soldiers were forming a circle and complaining.

"Did you hear? It seems that the palace knew from the start that it’s a griffon. We’re, just disposable pawns."

"……For the palace, the jobless low ranked nobles are like trash."

"Yeah."

"The palace bunches will be drinking tea while laughing at our death. If it’s like this, it would be better to spend time slovenly in the destitute row house. It turns out like this because I went out of my way trying to be successful."

"As for me, I got kicked out of the house by my parents and big brother, telling me to not return home unless I got some achievement. I already got a bad premonition. Shit! Those palace bunches, my parents, and my shitty brother too, drop dead all of you!"

The nobles who were barely in the rank of being able to inherit their house were gathering and complaining.

The townspeople were hurling abuse toward such soldiers.

"Fuck you all! Do you know how we're feeling while waiting for help until now!"

"That's right! When we thought……when we thought that help finally come, there are only cowards who came, every last one of you! Go fight! That's the job of you guys!"

"My husband, he desperately fought until help came and died! And yet, you guys……"

The soldiers replied thoughtlessly.

"So what? After all, we and also you guys—are abandoned by the country! In the first place who can win against something like griffon! We also can't run away, all of us are going to get toyed until death here!"

Hearing those words, the townspeople were aghast and turned pale. There were even people around who were starting a fight and punching each other.

A gap was being created between the subjugation force and the townspeople.

Novem muttered.

"It will be better if Norma-san is at least doing her job properly."

I could only agree.

"You're right. If only she do her job properly……I also won't be troubled."

We were abandoned.

The town was abandoned.

The region of Gioni that the palace casted away.

Surely from the palace’s point of view, it wouldn’t be a significant damage. But, from the point of view of the people who got abandoned, there was no way they could accept it.

"I’ll do it. ……I’ll make them regret it."

.

—The town’s inn where the knights were staying.

Morris was talking with Norma inside a room there.

"No way. I don’t want to die. I’ll be successful……"

Norma’s hair was messed up and her complexion was bad. Morris sighed inside his heart seeing that.

(Even this person is quiet powerful though.)

She wasn’t incompetent, but she was overly self-centered that she was hated by her colleagues. Besides, she would happily accept even a blatant bribe and even sought it out from her surrounding.

Her appearance wasn’t bad. Because she used it to butter up a superior with power, she was also able to become a ten-knight squad captain.

But, there were a lot of knights who hated her. There were knights who had their achievement stolen by her, and also knights who weren’t properly evaluated and looked down at because of her lie.

Norma would do anything for the sake of her own success. What she did was too excessive no matter how anyone looked at it.

(Even though she might become a hundred-knight squad captain around this time if only she did it normally.)

Her skill with sword and magic also wasn’t bad. Norma had the capability to succeed as a knight with her strength, and yet her personality was a disaster that obstructed her career instead.

"Commander, it’ll be dangerous if you don’t fight here. If you return, the palace will only blame you."

"Don’t say stupid things! I wasn’t told that there’ll be griffon. It’s my duty to quickly report this to the palace. That’s right, it’s my duty. That’s why, immediately prepare for my depart—"

"Enough with that already!"

Morris who was usually gentle finally snapped. Norma was speechless. Her mouth was opening and closing soundlessly.

"Do you still not understand? We’re abandoned by the palace. The townspeople had reported that there is a griffon. Even the magistrate who ran away to the capital should have reported the situation. Are you seriously thinking that the palace didn’t know this?"

Morris was a knight leader. In Bahnseim Kingdom, it was a rank above knight.

Above that rank was ten-knight squad leader, and above it was hundred-knight squad leader.

He couldn’t be said to be walking on the elite course as a knight, but he had worked as knight for many years until now.

If he heard various rumors with his ear, then he was also able to guess what the palace was thinking.

(Recently, the higher-ups were considering the increase of the jobless houses as a problem. It must be the cause of this.)

Bahnseim Kingdom was making use of this case to take care of that problem.

When the mishmash subjugation force lost, the regular army—the elites would be sent and there would be no problem. Rather, they should even use the annihilation of the first subjugation force as advertising.

The elite regular army defeating such fiendish monster would become a topic that greatly enlivened the capital.

"Commander, we're disposable pawn. If you return, you will lose your position and honor."

Norma shook her head.

"Lies. !! I never forget to give bribe to my superior! Why do I have to go through something like this! I—!"

She was hated by her colleagues. That was all.

Even for the superior, it would be dangerous to treat Norma specially when she was hated by the knights around her. His other subordinates would be discontent.

Morris resolved himself in his heart.

(Looks like I won't be able to go home. Well, my children are already big. Surely they'll be fine.)

Morris had no thinking of taking the right of command from Norma. He was thinking of his family who remained in the capital.

Then, the door was knocked—.

.

I could hear a screaming voice before entering the room. There was the feeling of grimness drifting in the air.

Even the knight who I asked to show us the way had a bad and unmotivated attitude. After he guided me to Norma-san’s room, he immediately left without saying anything.

Novem was standing diagonally behind me.

"Lyle-sama, I will respect Lyle-sama’s opinion no matter what is your decision."

Novem’s resolved gaze hurt.

Surely, she was thinking that I would take the right of command even if I had to kill Norma-san. Depending on the situation, Morris-san who was managing the troops would also have to be killed.

……I don’t want to do that.

"I’m only coming to have a talk. Don’t misunderstand."

"I spoke too much. My apologies."

Novem was also a daughter of a feudal lord noble.

Perhaps, her resolve was even firmer than me.

I knocked the door and entered, there Norma-san was sitting on the bed while trembling and hugging herself. Morris-san’s expression also didn’t look good.

The Third was easygoing.

[Looking just from this scene, somehow it feels like Morris-kun has done indecent thing to Norma-chan.]

I wished that he would be more tense.

"—Lyle-kun, what is your business? My bad but, right now I have no time to discuss. Can you put it off for later?"

Morris-san talked to me apologetically but, I looked at Norma-san.

"If you have no motivation then can you hand over the right of command to me?"

"……A lowly adventurer talking big like that."

Norma-san glared at me. Being glared at by a woman with messed hair and bad complexion felt really scary for some reason.

"I couldn’t get motivated when it was just a hippogriff. But, although there is no problem with just exterminating the griffon, at this rate I won’t be able to protect the town at the same time."

"You claim you can defeat a griffon? Have you ever defeated one before?"

"No, never."

"Then shut up. No one is going to get along with your hero make believe."

Norma-san couldn’t be talked with.

When I turned my gaze at Morris-san, he asked with an imploring expression.

"You—plan to win against a griffon?"

"I’ll win. But, I won’t be able to protect the town at the same time. The request for me is to subjugate the griffon and protect the town. It’s a problem that I won’t be able to protect the town."

I can win against griffon. That was what I declared, but inside frankly I didn’t know whether I could really do it or not. But, there was no choice except declaring that.

The Sixth sounded delighted.

[Good. If the other side believe it then it’s right in the bag for us! We want Morris at our side. But, Norma is no good!]

I continued talking with Morris-san.

"In this town there is the subjugation force we brought with us. In addition, although few there’re nearly five hundred residences of this town. We can oppose the monsters if we act now."

The five hundred townspeople were mostly consisting of women, children, and old people who couldn’t fight. Even so, the number of five hundred people was big. Even if the monsters numbered a thousand, it was a number that made you thought you would be able to manage somehow.

"But, you should have seen the soldiers we brought here. They won’t be able to fight properly at all."

"That depends on the method. If it’s me then we’ll absolutely win."

"Do you have experience in defensive battle?"

"None."

"Then—"

I showed a fearless smile.

"My name is Lyle. Lyle Walt—the eldest son of Walt House, a house of count. It’s fine, I’ve been taught something like doing a defensive battle."

"N, no, if it’s only being taught……besides, you can’t predict what will happen in real battle. You can’t do it just from studying."

Unfortunately, the Jewel that I had was filled with a lineup of bad guys with abundant experience. It was something that was packed full with Walt House’s history itself.

"Then, if it’s you can you win?"

"……N, no, that’s"

"I know the way to win. If we don’t win—if I can’t protect this town I won’t be able to receive the reward."

"……But, it’ll be troubling if you ask for the right to command. Ca, can’t we ask you to cooperate as an advisor?"

"No good. I want the right of command. If it’s for that then I’ll……"

I cut my words and stared fixedly on Morris-san. Cold sweat trickled down on Morris-san’s cheek. He could understand what I wanted to say.

"Besides……are you two alright with this?"

"Eh?"

"Getting tricked by the palace and sent her to die. Even if you ran away back there will only be execution waiting for you. Even if you fight as you are you won’t be able to win. What’s waiting for you is only an unsightly death. I’m asking you whether you’re alright with that."

"I, I’m not alright with that. But just what we can do in this situation……"

"Leave it to me. I’ll make us win."

The inside of the Jewel was quiet. The inside of the room was also quiet in waiting for my words. Even Norma-san didn't say anything.

"Griffon extermination. Town defense. As long as we don't accomplish these two then both me and you two don't have any future. Do you understand?"

We could also run away but, running away with just us was also shameful. In the first place……the ancestors wouldn't allow that.

"I have a way to change this situation for the better. I'll protect the town and subjugate the griffon too. And then we will return to the capital in triumph grandly. Let's report our victory to the shitty bastards in the palace with a smile. We who they hoped to be annihilated returning as hero will be the best revenge! We're going to watch their frustrated face."

I want to tell Ralph-san, no, that bastard Ralph this.

Haha~, it was shocking that a griffon came out.

I wanted to smash apart his scheme.

Morris-san gulped.

"To do that I want the right of command. If you leave it to me, then I'll make everyone here to be hero. You can look forward to promotion and reward. After all it's griffon subjugation. The palace will also welcome you back grandly."

They couldn't possible not welcome the group that accomplished a griffon subjugation. From the standpoint of the knights, seeing a group that subjugated a griffon not getting rewarded or even promoted would make them lose motivation. The dignity of the country itself would also be smeared.

That was why, they would welcome us no matter how reluctantly. I’m going to enjoy the forced smile of those guys.

That would become the best pay back.

While I was waiting for Morris-san’s words—.

"O, oi, you’re serious?"

—I heard a voice from behind.

Norma-san was standing up.

"Will you really make me a hero?"

I nodded even while feeling somewhat surprised.

"I, I will. However, I’ll take the subjugated griffon. It will fetch a high price. In exchange, I’ll arrange so the achievement of subjugating the griffon will belong to you—"

"Yosh! I’ll hand over the right of command!"

Morris-san’s mouth opened so wide as though his jaw had come off and yelled.

"COMMANDEEEERRR! You, just what are you SAYIIINGGG!"

"Shu, shut up! If he say he’s going to do it then isn’t it fine. This guy will work, and I’ll receive the result! It’s this guy who proposed it!"

As expected this development was also unexpected for me. I planned to argue down Morris-san and somehow persuaded Norma-san.

Novem was also making a complex expression.

"……Don’t you feel scared handing over your command?"

Norma-san snorted at Novem’s opinion.

"The possibility of dying here is high anyway. Besides, who want to look after those idiots. Rather, it feels like they will complain and attack me if I try to order them around. Besides, no subordinate will follow me even with me holding the command! Thinking carefully isn't this the best way? Because, you're adventurer. If this matter is over the soldiers will come back to me anyway. Honestly, I don't any fellows who aren't even formal knight or soldier so it's fine even if you take them away."

"……No, there's no need for that."

Morris-san was hiding his face with both his hands.

"Commander, someone like you is really…"

Even the ancestors inside the Jewel were dumbfounded.

[Is this woman actually a big shot? Is she not considering that she might get killed after her soldiers are taken away?]

[Haha~, certainly that's not impossible in this situation, but she easily give up her command.]

[Certainly there is no soldier who'll obey Norma. I guess it'll only be someone like Lionel who is doubtful?]

[There won't be anyone who listen to the words of a guy who ran away.]

[H~m, this Norma girl……will she become a splendid knight if she is trained?]

[There is also the possibility that she isn't blessed with the right mentor, but right now it's griffon that is more important.]

……Well, anyway.

It's great that I didn't need to kill Norma-san.

.

I asked Norma-san and Morris-san to persuade their subordinates.

I and Novem went to Patto-san who was managing this town.

I told the gloomy Patto-san that I was taking command. But, when I told him that Patto-san only said"Is that so".

I asked for Patto-san’s cooperation.

"I want to protect this town. Will you help me?"

"Even if you’re asking for cooperation, there are few male helpers and they’re completely tired. Just what are you going to ask more than this? Besides, even if we manage to subjugate the griffon, this town’s recovery is hopeless."

The Second talked to me.

[Well, if we win here, then that’s it for us. But, the task of recovery is waiting for the townspeople from here. With the town this battered, they won’t be able to get motivated.]

There was a wonder drug for that kind of time.

I placed a leather bag filled to the brim with gold coins on the table.

The color of Patto-san’s eyes changed.

"Thi, this is?"

"The compensation for your help. Of course, I will pay extra to the townspeople who work hard. It’ll be better to have money for the town’s recovery after this right?"

Patto-san bowed his head many times.

"Ye, yes! Thank you very much! I'll immediately gather the townspeople and tell them to help."

"Also, I've a bit of request."

"What is it?"

I requested him to lend me Luka as assistant.

"And then just one more thing. I will pay another reward for this."

"There is still more?"

I asked for one more thing at the end and finished the preparation.

.

The town's plaza.

The subjugation force and the townspeople were gathered there. Other than them, the people from the surrounding area who escaped to this town were also filling the plaza to form a crowd.

However, people who looked like they could fight properly didn't even number 200.

The difference of battle strength with the enemy was more than five times. The wall was also crumbling. It was nearly impossible to defend the town.

A podium was prepared in that plaza where I was looking down at everyone on it.

"I am Lyle Walt, the one who is in command from now."

There were still a lot of people doubting me in the plaza that fell silent. Putting aside the townspeople who had received money, the subjugation force was unable to believe me even if they were suddenly told that there was a change in commander.

I had showed them once how I and others fought, even so they would still feel uncertain if the opponent was a griffon.

"I have something to say first. ……I love high position and fame, and then I also love money and woman!"

The people were dumbfounded.

They must be unable to understand just what I was talking about.

The mass who wanted to listen at how I was going to defeat the griffon was taken aback.

Monica spilled a box that was filled with gold coins on the podium where everyone could see and formed a mountain of it. Everyone's gaze was poured to the piled up gold coin.

Next, coming up on the "stage" was Eva-san and Miranda-san wearing lascivious clothing.

Eva-san was wearing her costume when performing.

Miranda-san was borrowing a costume from Eva-san.

Their outfit had a lot of exposure. Frankly speaking it was an overly stimulating appearance.

I made the two of them stood at both of my sides and embraced their shoulders before pulling them close on me. The two of them hugged me. They wriggled their waist and didn't show any sign of displeasure. They even entwined their arms around me.

"I have obtained money and women. What's left is only fame and high position. If you guys follow me, I'll show you guys a good experience too."

The mass was getting noisy.

In the first place, if I was asked why I didn’t make a serious speech……even if I did it properly, my age and attitude wouldn’t make anyone believe in me.

Rather than someone like me taking command, anyone would be happier if a man in his forty or fifty with an appearance that looked like he got a lot of experience showed up. I didn’t look like someone experienced in battle or a fierce warrior at all.

Even if that kind of person was less capable than me, the mass who didn’t know anything would rather choose the man who looked experienced as commander rather than me.

In other words, I was lacking in age.

Then, I had no other choice but to take the audience by surprise.

Someone raised their voice. It was Lionel.

This guy was really nothing but a nuisance.

"Tha, that’s obviously a lie. There’s no way you can win against something like griffon!"

‘That’s right, that’s right’, some other small voices said.

"Then you can go hiding while shivering. You’ll only get in the way. But, those who follow me will obtain the prestige of griffon extermination."

There were those with gleaming eyes.

The large amount of gold coin wasn’t just several hundred coins. After all, we sold the blueprint of Porter to the academy before leaving Arumsaas.

There was also the mediation from Damian so I was able to obtain a lot of money.

"But, it’ll be boring with just that isn’t it? You guys want it right……these piled up gold coins."

Someone gulped their saliva.

With this much money, one would be able to live for their whole live without any discomfort.

That was just how much money this was.

"……I’ll give it. If you guys follow me then I’ll reward you. One monster is equal to one gold coin. If you take down a hippogriff, then I’ll give you fifty gold coins. Whoops, the griffon is my prey so don’t try anything with it okay?"

Any kind of monster would be worth one gold coin. This could be said as an extraordinary term.

Someone said.

"You, you’ll really pay!?"

"Yeah, I’ll pay. I can earn something like money again easily. It’s a cheap price if I can obtain the fame of defeating griffon in exchange."

Gradually the men, and then the older men and aging men, and even the women were gazing with gleaming eyes. Their greed were stimulated in front of the mountain of gold coins.

Even so there was still guy who was in opposition—Lionel spoke.

"You’re just planning to trick us by saying that! You cannot win anyway so you’re getting desperate!"

What a contradictory guy.

However, my composed smile didn’t crumble.

I made an impudent, nasty, and villainous grin.

"Desperate? That’s not it. I have prospects of victory. And then, the money before you is the proof of my strength. I’m an adventurer. I’m formerly a heir of a house of count. I was driven out of my house, but I became an adventurer and made this much money. These gold coins, they’re the riches I obtained from monsters! I became an adventurer and had buried uncountable monsters until now!"

The murmuring voices came from the soldiers who participated in the subjugation force.

"No, now that he mentioned it, he defeated a large snake."

"His comrades were also really strong."

"Could it be he really can win?"

I explained that I had climbed up in the world using a lot of money as the proof.

"Do you want money?"

A loud voice came from somewhere.

"I, I want it!"

"Then fight! And then, obtain everything in your hands! You can obtain fame. You can obtain position. You can obtain money. You can obtain woman! A hero who defeated griffon. You’ll be praised until the next generation!"

"I’ll do it. I’m gonna do it!"

"Me too. This ain’t the time to shake in my boot!"

"I, I’ll join up too!"

Voices were rising up one after another. The plaza was enveloped in enthusiasm.

The preparation I arranged—the hired applauders were useful.

Yes, everything was a bluff.

In the first place, this much money came from selling Porter's blueprint.

The women were also because of my request to them to act this time. Eva-san was used to it, but Miranda-san was also able to do this much skillfully.

On the other hand it felt like this would be impossible for Clara-san. Aria-san and Sophia-san too, they would surely make stiff smile. In the first place they wouldn't do something like this.

Monica didn't want to change from her maid uniform, and Shannon was out of question.

For Novem, I was entrusting her with various tasks.

I could only ask these two.

The Third was delighted.

[Ahah! They're really simpleton! Let's start assigning them work right away! I'm excited for the fight against the monster army!]

Even though usually he was telling me to be careful, why was he having fun at this kind of time? It was hard to understand.

The Sixth was also in high tension.

[Now, Lyle—after this will be the beginning of a fun timeeee!]

Chapter 72 – Contract

—Novem was preparing a lot of paper.

Table and chair were prepared outside. Aria and Sophia were also sitting side by side. The hands of the two of them were dirtied by ink.

Sophia was making a tired face.

"I, I’m not used to it, preparing paperwork like this."

Novem was making a written contract. The terms of being hired by Lyle were written there.

Aria was also completely tired.

"No more. I hate this kind of work. You can just tell Monica to do this. And Clara is going somewhere to prepare the contract……"

Novem sighed slightly.

"Clara-san isn’t good with talking to people. It will be just us dealing with the people. Also, both of you, please learn this kind of work too. Now, people will come soon."

Shannon was standing beside the three of them holding a signboard while speaking out.

"People who want to fight, please line up over here."

After Lyle’s speech was over, a wave of people was surging on all at once.

The first one to come was a knight wearing armor.

"Oi. Even knight will be paid with the reward right!?"

Novem smiled in response.

"Yes. No matter what kind of monster it is, it will be one gold coin if you defeat it."

"I'll do it! I'll sign the contract!"

"Then, please sign on the contract that you will follow Lyle-sama's order."

"I'll sign. Right away. It's far better than working under that Norma!"

A middle-aged auntie came to Aria's place.

"Hey, even woman will also be rewarded won't it?"

"E, err……there is other work, if you're helping with that then we'll pay around this much—"

"I'll do it. Wait, what about my son and daughter? They're already ten years old, so they can also help."

"Ye, yes, in that case"

People were also coming to Sophia's place one after another.

"Ple, please wait. Err, in such case like that—"

"Lady, be quicker about it!"

"No, that's why"

"We're still waiting over here!"

Sophia was explaining the terms to those who couldn't read and then making them signed the contract. She was doing her best even though she was overwhelmed by the work that she wasn't used to—.

.

—Lionel and his friends were some distance away from the plaza.

Lyle ended up taking the command. After being told that, Lionel was unable to endure it.

"Why is it that guy? Why……"

Since when he saw Lyle’s figure defeating monster during the march, Lionel was feeling impatience toward Lyle. He was stronger than him. Besides, his comrades were also strong.

He was also irritated that Lyle was being surrounded by pretty comrades. He was riding on a vehicle he had never seen before, and it was also irritating how everyone’s gaze was focused on him.

Lionel was jealous at Lyle who had things that he didn’t have.

When it came to him, he lost his comrades, and he could only look down in depression.

And then amidst that, one of them stood up.

"My bad, but I’ll join over there."

"Haa? You’re going to fight under that kind of guy? That guy isn’t a noble."

"……Is that relevant?"

Lionel was dumbfounded.

His friend expressed his honest feeling.

"It’s not like it’s matter who I’m working under. If I can survive and receive money then I’m fine with that. Besides, I won’t be able to receive money even if I stay with you."

"O, oi. Think it again."

"I have enough already."

"……Eh?"

"I understand that the bunch in palace is treating us like disposable pawn. But you know, why the hell we have to go through something like this. Aren’t you vexed?"

"Tha, that’s!"

"In the first place……I hate you."

"Wha-!"

"Because you cajoled a daughter of a viscount house by yourself and you’re going to marry her right? Even if we work hard it’ll count as your achievement, I can’t stomach seeing you alone having a good time."

It would be better to follow Lyle who would give him money, he said. When he left from there, another one stood up and left.

When Lionel noticed, he was alone in that place—.

.

After finishing the speech, in order to carry the plan forward right away—I distributed food.

No, actually I wanted to get on with the work immediately.

However, everyone was hungry, so you knew the rest.

The meal of the subjugation force was plain and wearisome, in addition the townspeople were also spending days of anxiety and they weren’t able to really eat.

Anyway, it began from emergency feeding.

Monica were preparing food together with the aunties of the town.

But…….

"You’re wearing a strange clothes."

"Maid uniform is strange clothes!? I can only slightly doubt your common sense."

"Besides wearing that kind of frilly clothes will make it easy to get dirty."

"It won’t get dirty. This Monica’s outfit is cutting edge—"

"Oh, the pot is boiling up."

"Listen to me-!"

Seeing that Monica being handled casually like that, I thought that auntie was amazing.

"Lyle, you were cool just now. It’s okay for you to act boldly all the time like that you know?"

It was Miranda-san’s voice. I turned my face toward her, but I immediately covered my eyes with my hands.

Miranda-san was still wearing Eva-san’s outfit.

"Please change. I don’t know where to look."

"You were acting normally before this weren’t you?"

"……That was acting."

"H~m, even though I thought that you like this. Putting that aside, what do you plan to do from here?"

Her tone and expression changed into seriousness, so I talked while keeping my gaze away from Miranda-san.

"I'll split the labor for some to work and some to train. After that, I'm asking people to create weapon."

The repair of the wall and the manufacturing of weapon. I especially wanted arrows.

There was also the minimum necessary training, but before that I had to think about the troop composition.

—In addition.

"I asked Aria-san and Eva-san to leave for scouting."

"Aria and Eva?"

.

—Outside the town.

Aria and Eva got down from the horse and surveyed the surrounding.

Their hand was holding a map of the place where the monsters were lurking.

They were riding horse until midway. They found a destroyed house and tied the horse over there.

Eva was preparing water for the horse.

Aria watched what Eva was doing.

"You're really used to that work."

"I was together with a troupe of traveling performer after all. I had to learn this even if I don't want it."

"You were also good at riding horse. You also have experience is riding aren’t you?"

"I have. When I was small I rode on horse and imitate a hero. I did that second after singing practice."

Elf was tough in various aspects.

She was asked to scout because she was a good walker and her knowledge regarding forest.

Aria shrugged.

"I don’t get it. You look like you will refuse if you’re requested to do this kind of dangerous work."

Eva grinned.

"Oh, isn’t this a valuable experience? Besides, just this much is cheap if I’ll be able to watch griffon subjugation directly."

For the sake of son, for the sake of her desire for a tale that no one knew but her. Aria found it hard to understand when she heard about the reason Eva was helping.

"Elf is a strange creature huh."

"That’s rude. It’s human who is strange. More importantly, should we go already?"

Aria nodded, then she took slightly dirty brown robes from her belonging. She handed one down to Eva and wore one herself.

A hooded robe.

Eva also didn’t complain and wore it. The two of them then entered the forest.

Aria was impressed by the strength of Eva's legs and waist. It made her thought as expected from elf.

(This person, she is composed after entering the forest.)

They didn't talk.

They were already inside the forest that was like the living place of monsters.

When Eva found a tree, she signed with her hand for Aria to stop. Aria looked at the tree that Eva showed her.

A deep claw mark was carved at a position that wasn't visible from Aria's position.

Besides, the ground was also gouged.

(Is this, griffon's claw mark?)

The two of them carefully advanced forward, then they found monsters acting vigilant to the surrounding.

Eva frowned.

There was no leeway to talk so they continued the scouting. Then they found an open space that was made from the forest's trees violently knocked down.

There, they found large monsters like orc and oger to small monsters like goblin.

There was a griffon at the center. Hippogriffs were gathered around it.

It looked like the monsters were feasting with the gathered food.

The two of them slowly left that place.

Inside the forest there were also several other small groups. They were unable to accurately counted the number of the whole, but it was certain that the forest had been greatly devastated.

The two of them sneaked out of the forest and returned until the house where their horses were tied. Then they conversed about what they had seen.

"This is the worst. Wild animals has been mostly gone too. Those guys ate everything."

"Now that you mention it I didn’t see any animal."

"The forest is also laid waste into a terrible state. Even so, it will be fine for a while if their condition is like that."

"You understand that? They didn’t look like they’ll be able to move right away but……"

"Well, you’ll get used to guess that. If they’re going to move right away, they’ll look more murderous."

Aria thought that it was correct to bring along Eva.

(……I’m beaten. I’m losing even in scouting.)

Even though she had especially polished her skill as scout in Arumsaas, she lost against a traveling performer elf. Aria felt frustrated.

"Somehow you don’t look like you can accept it. I’ll tell you this, they really wouldn’t move for a while. This might sound bad but, from the griffon’s perspective this is just a game. That griffon, it might not have been long since it was born. It’s a really young griffon."

Even attacking a city was in the extent of playing around from a griffon’s perspective.

And then, according to Eva it seemed the griffon was young. Although she called it born but it didn’t mean that it had parents. A monster was grown up from the first time it appeared. Not much time had passed since it was born, rather than vigilance it had stronger curiosity and its strong desire to play around was standing out.

"……It’s not like I’m dissatisfied. You’re also more knowledgeable than me, I have no dissatisfaction at all about that."

Eva put her hands on her waist and peered on Aria’s face.

"Then what is it?"

"I just hated my own worthlessness."

Aria said that and held her necklace—the red Gem. The red Gem that could be said as Lockwarde House’s heirloom was different from Lyle’s Jewel, it wouldn’t teach Aria its Arts.

"That’s, a Gem isn’t it?"

Eva stared with great interest.

"I can’t use it though. Somehow, it feels like the Gem isn’t recognizing me."

Aria immediately mounted her horse to return.

Eva called out to Aria who was like that.

"A strong feeling will be conveyed. How about you try wishing for strength more strongly?"

Aria slightly smiled with self-depreciation.

"I had tried that many times."

Eva shrugged and mounted her horse. Seeing that Aria made her horse run in order to return to the town with the two of them—.

.

Things that seemed usable from the belonging of the subjugation force were only this.

Near the horse carts that brought the supplies, I was standing in front of tools that were lined up on a wooden box.

The lined up items were crossbows and bows.

"……There isn’t many."

Morris-san was coming along with me in order to check the supplies. Norma-san was also beside me, but in the first place she wasn’t able to grasp the condition of the supply and she was useless.

This person, when I asked her how she would defeat a hippogriff, she said "I’ll slash it when it’s coming down, I guess".

"At first, the commander planned to wound the hippogriff with bow and arrow, and when it comes down she would defeat it then. The knights including me can also use some magic, so these things aren’t really needed."

"What did you intend to do with the other monsters?"

"We would manage that somehow using number. In fact we heard that the threat wasn’t that high, so at first I even thought that with this number it might be a little excessive."

From the information of the palace, it seemed they thought that they would manage somehow with equipment of this level.

The Fourth’s voice talked to me.

[Everything is lacking. Training is needed to use bow, and using crossbow, it will take time to reload the arrow. Now then, what to do now.]

For some reason his voice sounded like he was having fun even though this situation was troubling like this.

Norma-san was looking uneasy.

"Will you really manage just with this many equipments? Won’t it be better to ride on the steel box you were using to come here and run away?"

Steel box. She must mean Porter.

"We cannot bring everyone to escape like that, and it’ll be dangerous if we get surrounded while escaping. Please don’t leave the city, because it seems there’re monsters wandering around."

Morris-san pressed his forehead.

"It’s troublesome. It’ll be great if we can forcefully break through while protecting the townspeople."

The enemy was griffon. A monster that could fly.

We would be overtaken no matter what, and if we were attacked while running away there would definitely be victim. Besides, we didn’t have the option of running away.

"Even if we manage to escape, the palace will complain at us."

"Yeah."

Morris-san also understood that.

The outer wall surrounding the town wasn’t tidy but it had rectangle shape.

There were gates at four directions. We had to place troop there.

Who had to be placed where. That was also a problem.

The Second was pondering.

[It’s also a problem that the number of people who can fight is few. Loading the crossbow also takes time, so it isn’t likely that it’ll be really useful. It will be great if there is more of it.]

The Second had different opinion.

[Is that so? If we have this many people that you can just make those who can’t fight to reload the arrow and hand over the crossbow to the shooter. If you exchange the crossbow too after finishing shooting, in theory you’ll be able to fire continuously.]

The Seventh wasn’t energetic for some reason.

[……It’ll be faster if there is gun. Even though it’ll be great if it get more popular.]

The Seventh loved gun and gunpowder. Because of that, the way he fought also specialized in using those. To put another way, he was inferior compared to the other ancestors if those things weren't available.

Well…….

[I only have idea for several traps. Lyle, go ask for bombs to Miranda. I want the type that will explode flashily.]

It couldn't be said that he was useless though.

Morris-san observed my expression.

"Ca, can we win?"

I declared.

"We'll win. I'll win and protect the town."

.

—Clara was watching the town's condition.

After Lyle's speech, the town was coming alive bustlingly. People were filled with liveliness.

The subjugation force and the townspeople who were disunited were divided into groups to do work or training.

Nearby, Sophia was standing with a nervous look.

"What's the matter, Sophia-san?"

"……I was told by Lyle-san to fight while leading people. I, don't have that kind of experience."

The reason of her nervousness was because soldiers, knights, and also volunteering townspeople were assigned to her.

In order to protect the four gates, a commander was assigned to each of them. Morris, Miranda, Aria, Sophia, these four. Lyle was the top who commanded the whole troops.

"Norma-san should be the one placed here."

Sophia complained. She was flustered from suddenly placed as a commander.

"It’s because the command has been handed over to Lyle-san. Perhaps he think that the scene will fall into disorder if Norma-san comes out?"

"Even so, I think it’ll be better than me doing it. There is also Novem-san."

"Novem-san will be in rear support together with me. Novem-san who can use healing magic is a precious existence after all."

Novem who could heal and Clara who was the driver of Porter would be in rear support. Monica and Shannon were also the same.

Lyle was also considering sending Monica to the front line. However, to move this many people, it was difficult to prepare the necessary food and many other things with human labor.

Monica could do it, so Lyle could only put her in charge of the rear support.

"I understand that we don’t have enough people but, me leading people is unthinkable."

Sophia was holding her head at her wits’ end. Clara gave her a follow up.

"Does Sophia-san think that Lyle-san place you in command because he has no other choice?"

"……Perhaps. Because I’m inferior compared to everyone."

"I am weaker than Sophia-san you know?"

"Clara-san can drive Porter. I can’t do that."

"The right person in the right place. Sophia-san should be confident. Lyle-san should be thinking that if it’s Sophia-san then you can do it."

Sophia raised her face.

"Is that so?"

"Yes. There is no doubt."

It wasn’t like Lyle had said that directly. But, even from Clara’s perspective, Sophia who was specialized in battle could only be placed here.

She was far stronger than even the average knight.

"The, then, I’ll try doing my best."

"If it’s Sophia-san you can do it."

Clara thought that if even Sophia couldn’t do it, then this battle was already the same as lost.

(Even so, Lyle-san is really good in arrangement. He quickly took away the command, and he’s also thinking of the positioning. Really, why is someone this capable got driven out of his house? I can’t understand.)

Clara was questioning Lyle’s action that was like someone experienced—.

.

[Prioritize repairing the outer wall. Dig out moat around it.]

I listened to the Second’s statement while explaining in front of the prepared map.

The place was the inn.

I gathered the appointed supervisors and explained what to do from here on.

It was a group that was nothing more than a ragtag band with few training.

I had to speak simply and clearly.

"We’ll repair the outer wall while creating moat around it. With this we can deal slightly better against the monsters clinging on the wall."

The knights including Morris-san and the representative of the townspeople starting from Patto-san nodded.

The town was located on a level ground.

The visibility was good, and there was also no obstacle at the four directions. The difficulty level was high for the defender.

[Place traps before the gate. When the enemy’s momentum is strong, lure them inside into the trap.]

"After that, we’ll create traps inside the town. When the enemy’s momentum is strong, lure them in and use the trap to repulse them."

There wasn’t a lot that we could do. I heard from Aria-san and Eva-san’s information that the griffon still wasn’t moving. However, there wouldn’t even be one week before they started moving.

One of the knights who were listening pointed at the map while expressing his opinion.

"In that case we should prepare more traps. Let’s create a watchtower here, and then let’s also place a trap here. If we destroy the building—"

The townspeople who heard that opposed that suggestion.

"It’ll be troubling if you create something like that there! The damage there is few. If you destroy the building, we won’t be able to live there!"

"The enemy will be attacking! This isn’t the time to say that!"

"This is concerning our livelihood!"

It was getting rough so I clapped my hand to gather everyone’s attention.

[Lyle, the material and manpower are limited. Tell them that even just this much is the limit. Anyone can speak about the ideal. Teach them that we can only do what we can.]

"Our material aren’t sufficient for more than this. Besides, the time and manpower are also limited. I’ll judge that this is the limit."

The knight fell silent. Even I wanted to harden our defense and armed everyone as much as possible to feel a peace of mind. But, what we could do was limited.

The townspeople questioned me.

"Err……the moat will also take time though?"

"We won’t dig too deep, it’s fine to just do it as much as possible. Besides, we have a skilled magician among us. I’ll ask her to help."

I ended up relying on Novem. One of the knights muttered.

"It’s not like in “Magician’s Village” but, is it okay?"

His fellow knight laughed teasingly at him.

"You’re believing that kind of fairy-tale?"

There was also quarrel breaking out at the middle, but the meeting ended safely.

.

—Shannon was together with Luka.

Shannon who was useless to begin with could do nothing except staying quite. Even if there was something that she would be able to do, it would be for later.

Shannon was reading a picture book together with Luka who was like a little brother.

"Shannon-sama, what is “Magician’s Village”?"

"Oh, you don’t even know that? Very well, I’ll teach you."

Shannon was obtaining the feeling of superiority as the older one while talking to Luka about Magician’s Village.

(Fufu, I know because I asked Onee-sama to read me the picture book. Good job, me!)

Inside her heart she praised her past self who was listening to Miranda’s story in the past.

"In the past, there was a small village. That village was poor. There was also little food so everyday was hard. A magician came to that village then. Anyway the magician was amazing. When he came to

the village he created houses and farming fields. He prepared large houses and large fields for all the villagers."

"He was really kind person!"

Seeing Luka happy made Shannon felt proud.

"The magician also felt happy at first. And so, he worked even harder for the village's sake. The village became bigger and really prosperous."

"How nice."

"But you see, before long the villagers were gradually getting reliant on the magician. They said things like, I want bigger home, or I want a large field and servant. The villagers who tasted luxury became lazy to work. Because the magician granted all their wish, they became spoiled."

"A, and, what happened next?"

"……The magician died. From the beginning he was an old man I think? Rather than grieving, the villagers were thinking of who to rely on next."

"That's terrible."

"That's right. Because they were terrible they got punished. The village that got big due to magic caught the eyes of an evil god. The evil god came and destroyed everything. The remaining villagers had never worked until then so they found it difficult to even cultivate the field. Because they had known luxury they lamented living in poverty. In the end the village became even poorer than before the magician came. This is the story of "Magician's Village"."

Luka got scared.

"An evil god came? Lyle-sama ordered to prepare the moat using magic. Then the evil god will come?"

Shannon was amused by that purity that came from his childishness.

"He will come. Luka, you might get eaten when the evil god come."

Shannon was having fun looking at the scared Luka, but there Novem came. She spoke to Luka with a smile.

"It'll be fine."

"Ah, Novem-sama!"

When Luka looked happy with Novem's arrival, Shannon felt like her little brother had been taken away and got miffed.

Novem talked about that fairy-tale.

"The evil god destroyed the village that the magician created was because the villagers were haughty. The evil god won't come to the place of someone who is working hard to protect a town like Lyle-sama."

"Really?"

"Yes, it'll be fine. Besides, the "Magician's Village" will be destroyed even if the evil god didn't come."

Shannon tilted her head.

"Is that so?"

Novem nodded.

"After all this fairy-tale is a story of warning that you will become unable to do anything when it's time if you're relying completely on magic."

They nodded in understanding, even Shannon.

"……Eh? Then, isn’t the entrance of the evil god unneeded?"

Novem chuckled.

"You’re right. But, this kind of story sometimes is based on true story, so perhaps the people of the past might really got their “country” destroyed by an evil god."

Luka was getting scared again, so Novem told him it would be alright once more to calm him down. Novem was always kind, but she was interacting with Luka even more kindly than when she was treating other children.

Shannon who was watching that felt something tugging on her mind.

(Novem is strangely kind to Luka. Even so, why did she say “country” and not village? Even though it’s a story of magician’s “village”……I don’t understand the meaning. ……Well, it doesn’t matter.)

Shannon was feeling something out of place seeing Novem being affectionate to Luka like this, almost like how she was treating Lyle, but from the beginning Shannon’s disposition wasn’t good at thinking deeply. She immediately became unconcerned—.

.

The town started working the next day of the meeting.

Because I was taking command of the whole operation, I was looking over the town from a building’s roof. Certainly I thought that it was a small town, but when I looked over it now thinking of “protecting” it, it looked really big.

I got worried whether I would really be able to protect this town to the end.

"Lyle-san, the workers who drank the water I prepared collapsed from stomachache."

I looked at Clara-san who came reporting.

I held my head.

"I told them already not to drink water that was created by magic! I told them that clearly didn’t I!?"

"It seemed those people thought that it would be alright. They said that their body isn’t that soft and drank the water. Please send Novem-san to them."

I asked Clara-san to prepare water and hot water for people to clean their body. I had told the workers thoroughly that water created from magic would break the stomach so don’t drink them.

I couldn’t help from yelling my dissatisfaction to the workers.

Next Aria-san climbed on the roof.

"Lyle, there was a dispute and someone got wounded."

"Why are they fighting!?"

"No, they said something about running away at the middle or cutting corners in the work."

I covered my face with both hands.

"……This kind of report keeps coming."

……It made me anxious whether we would really be able to protect the city and defeated the griffon.

This kind of report was coming in one after another.

"……Novem is in the middle of working, so wait for a bit more."

Novem was working with magic in order to create moat. That work was the priority. If they weren't in a situation where they would die soon, then I could only ask them to endure.

Clara-san made a troubled face.

"Then I'll treat them normally, but their return to work will be delayed. The work efficiency will fall."

Just what should I do?

While I was feeling troubled, the ancestors were talking.

[It's nostalgic. It was also difficult at my time.]

[It's funny. It's real funny. It's amusing when watching this as third person! I couldn't laugh at the slightest when going through this hardship on my own though.]

[They'll do it even when told not to. I also had it hard.]

[……If it was me then I might yell at them.]

[If it was at my time then anyone will get angry. However like this……it's funny!]

[It's funnier than the average comedy. It makes me laugh even louder exactly because I can understand the feeling.]

Perhaps because they were in the position of only giving advice, the ancestors were laughing.

I couldn't laugh at the slightest.

"If it's like this should I go out to work making the moat?"

Clara-san stopped me from doing that.

"It will be troubling if another report come and Lyle-san isn't here. If possible I wish you will stay here."

Aria-san was also troubled.

"Also, it's also terrible at Sophia's place. I also have no leeway, so can Lyle cover for her? You know, that girl is too serious so she'll force herself to manage somehow."

Even I wanted to cover up for her. However, the reports kept coming. Or rather, problems were occurring one after another that I couldn't move.

"Monica is also busy, and it'll be no good if I don't have Novem do her best. Someone who is free……no good, there is only the useless Shannon left."

Even while at my wits' end, I gave the two their instruction and they left. I sat down on the spot.

"……Why isn't things going well?"

The Third spoke happily.

[Have you learned slightly from this? It's great that the girls around Lyle are all capable isn't it?]

Could it be, the ancestors were telling me to accept the request this time was in order to teach me this reality?

The Fourth was also laughing.

[It's great that you properly had each person sign the contract. If you only had the right of command transferred to you, there also will be people who complain and won't work. As expected, the power of money is mighty.]

The big reason we purposefully made people signed a contract was in order to make it clear to them of who to obey rather than the matter of paying money.

It was done in order to make them think that they would be able to receive reward if they listened to my order.

"More importantly, our spending is really big. Will it be alright?"

[There is no problem. It’s cheap if you can obtain the fame of griffon subjugation with that¸ is not something that I can say but, if there’s a method to compensate for the spending.]

Surely he was making a bad face right now. The Fourth who was laughing eerily was scary.

I stood up to think about the matter from here on.

"Lyle~, the craftsmen are angry and stop their work though~"

Eva-san climbed on the roof with a tired face.

……Enough, spare me already you all.

Chapter 73 – Defensive Battle

—Several days later.

Novem was helping with the work of creating moat using magic.

When she lifted her staff, the ground moved and created ditch outside the outer wall. People entered the ditch, and gave it finishing touch by hitting the ground using tool to harden it.

The repair of the outer wall was progressing a lot within several days, and soon the moat would also be completed. The cause of that was also because Lyle was dividing people into groups and making them competed with each other.

The better group would also be given reward in the form of alcohol and food from the supplies that they bought up.

The amount wasn't much, but due to this the sense of competition was budding and the progress of the work became better.

Looking at the working people, there were also the figures of demi-human among them. The petite gnome or the short but wide-bodied and brawny dwarf could also be seen.

They were the demi-human races who were living in the town as craftsmen.

Novem took a rest.

It was because using magic continuously was forbidden. When there were people who suddenly got wounded, there was only Novem who could deal with it. Because of that, it was necessary for her to preserve her mana.

However, there were also people who didn’t think well of that.

A thin man with unkempt hair was approaching Novem.

"Oi, woman! Why the hell aren’t you working!?"

Novem responded even while feeling exasperated. She didn’t show any of her exasperation on her face.

"Using magic tire me. Please allow me to rest for a bit."

"Who cares! They won’t give us the beer if you don’t work harder. I want to drink beer!"

Novem thought that someone troublesome was picking a quarrel with her. Around her, there were a gnome and a dwarf approaching. They warned the man.

"Oi, this good-for-nothing. Don’t you dare complaining at a hard-worker."

"Wha, what’s with you pipsqueaks! Are you going against your better, a human like me huh!?"

This man must be a known good-for-nothing.

The dwarf was glaring at the man.

"Shut your mouth and return to work. Our group cannot drink beer because you’re holding us down. Do you want to get beaten up by everyone?"

When the man looked at his other working comrades, they were glaring at him harshly. His shoulders dropped seeing that and he returned to his work.

The gnome apologized to Novem.

"Sorry miss. That guy is a good-for-nothing who’s doing nothing but drinking. Don’t pay any attention to that guy."

The dwarf was also looking apologetic. He seemed to be a moody man, but he was interacting with Novem kindly even though he was looking awkward.

"Anyway we’ll punch him to make him quiet, so forgive us."

"N, no, please don’t go that far."

Novem said that doing that would increase the unnecessary work and she somehow stopped them from beating up the man—.

.

The town had been improved much for the sake of the battle.

The repair of the outer wall was progressing, and the placement of the traps was also nearing completion.

"Making them to compete improved the result."

It consumed their supply, but right now speed was the important thing.

[Fanning up their sense of rivalry like this sped up the process. Well, it’ll be even better if it also grow the awareness that they’re comrades.]

It was the Third’s suggestion, and it was the correct action to implement it.

The dawn came and I could see the whole town.

I only felt anxiety when arriving here, but with the wall restored to make it easier to defend the town, it reduced the anxiety of the subjugation force and the townspeople.

While I was staring at the scenery from the building’s rooftop, I could hear a voice from below.

"Chicken dickwad. I’ve finished preparing breakfast~. Please eat Monica’s, this Monica’s breakfast that is stuffed full with lo~ve."

……This girl was lively right from the morning.

Someone was protesting to such Monica. It was Norma-san.

"You~ My breakfast is just bread and soup! Why is it only that guy’s breakfast that is luxurious!? Give me the same thing!"

"……Tsk"

Monica clicked her tongue with a displeased face.

"Just now, you clicked your tongue!"

"What about it? This food is from the ingredients that we brought ourselves. The same food for all those crowds over there is enough for you."

"I’m the ten-knight squad leader! A squad leader!"

"……So?"

The two who were quarreling right from the morning because of breakfast—or rather, Norma-san’s thick skin made me felt both exasperated and impressed.

Then, the sharp cry of bird resounded through the nice air of the morning.

[Lyle, it seems they’re coming.]

I grabbed the Jewel in respond to the Second’s voice.

The map of the surrounding formed inside my head and I was able to check the enemy’s number.

"There isn’t many. It’s not even a hundred."

[Are they planning to check the situation? Or perhaps, they’re planning to measure the strength of the new prey? It’s really like griffon to play around like this.]

Far away I could see a hippogriff flapping its wings.

I sounded the set up bell.

.

—The sound of bell could be heard early in the morning.

Clang clang, it resounded noisily and made Lionel woke up. He was just sleeping with people of the same group just now.

"The noise is loud……what’s going on?"

He rubbed his eyes and lifted his upper body.

In the end, Lionel was working under Lyle. There was also how all the comrades who came with him chose to follow Lyle, but other than that it was also Lyle who was distributing the food. He wouldn’t be able to eat if he didn’t work so he had no choice but to obey.

The surrounding was moving around noisily and busily.

The group leader was a subordinate knight of Norma.

"What’re you doing! Hurry and prepare to fight!"

Within the group there were the soldiers of the subjugation force and the town’s men. Everyone was given a weapon and they were sent to their station.

Lionel was following his comrades with staggering footsteps. During that time his head cleared up.

The sound of bell was still continuing.

"……So the enemy came."

When he muttered that, he woke up from his sleepiness and he was pulled into reality. He forgot even the winter's coldness and let out cold sweat. The beating of his heart quickened.

The knight yelled.

"Listen, don't go away from your station! You just need to move like in training!"

The surrounding looked worried hearing those words.

"Training, you mean……we only did it for a bit you know?"

"Can we really win in this kind of situation?"

"I, I'm nervous."

Everyone was uneasy. No matter how much they were told that they could win, no matter how they were told that they would be given money, scary thing would stay scary.

Lionel was also trembling, but he noticed before long.

(E, eh? The enemy isn't attacking?)

He thought that the enemy would come attacking right away, but there wasn't even any sign of it yet.

Someone spoke to the knight.

"Could it be a false alarm?"

But, the knight didn't listen to that opinion.

"Don’t talk pointlessly!"

The other group was also gathering. Suddenly, a girl rushed to that place. She had jumped high and came down as though landing from the sky. It was Aria.

Aria’s red hair swayed. Her body was wrapped in armor that showed her body line and her hand was holding a spear. The morning sun illuminating her form made her looked sublime.

Her hair that was somewhat disheveled from just waking up and her act of wiping her mouth for some reason were just trivial problem before that.

"Sorry, I’m late."

The knight replied.

"No, we still have time."

"Breakfast will also get brought here soon, so let’s finish various things first before that."

Lionel’s cheeks blushed. He was unable to take off his gaze from Aria who was talking with the knight.

(Pretty.)

Lionel whose eyes were stolen by Aria who looked radiant from the sunlight felt like his heart got tightly grabbed—.

.

The monsters under the lead of a hippogriff came attacking.

Their number was about a hundred.

"It would be great if only we could prepare just a little bit more."

The Fifth slightly laughed at my hope.

[It’s normal for things to not go as you want it. But, you’re lucky that you were able to prepare to this degree. In addition, the enemy is sending their force by piecemeal. This is so good you should be thankful instead.]

Rather than suddenly getting attacked by the enemy’s whole force, certainly this might be better.

I hurriedly finished my meal and stared at the town from the rooftop.

After I rang the bell several times as decided before, I could hear bell sound from the outer wall. I confirmed that replies came from all four directions before ringing the bell once more.

We were conversing using the number of bell ringing that had been decided beforehand.

A voice came from below.

It was Clara-san driving Porter.

"Lyle-san, we finished the preparation."

Clara-san who usually wouldn’t talk loudly spoke as loud as she could. Even so it still sounded small.

"Please head to Miranda-san’s location. The enemy is coming from there."

"U, understood."

I saw off Porter driving away with its engine sound resounding while standing still on that spot.

"……Will it be better if I do something?"

[Stupid idiot. If you’re giving instruction then stay where you’re firmly. You’re going to get busy whether you like it or not anyway later. Even so, the enemy suddenly came to Miranda’s position huh……send reinforcement.]

When the Fifth immediately tried to favor Miranda-san, the Second stopped him.

[Porter is already heading there. It’s enough with that.]

[I, it’s for just in case.]

When the two started retorting to each other, the Sixth also joined next and it became noisy.

.

—Miranda got into her position and stretched up.

Tension couldn’t be felt from her.

Two knights who became her subordinates stood straight and reported to Miranda.

"Captain, everyone is in position!"

"There is no problem!"

Miranda’s group that showed brisk and lively movement better than any other groups was undoubtedly the group with highest proficiency among the whole force.

"No need to be that nervous. The enemy is just a hundred monsters after all. For now, attack the enemy from the wall first, and if they charge then let them in."

"Roger!"

"Leave it to us!"

Miranda saw the two knights heading to the position of their subordinates, then she began doing calisthenics.

(Even so for the enemy to suddenly come to my place……it’s lucky.)

Miranda was happy that she was able to do rehearsal before the full-scale attack of the monsters.

(But, as expected being able to prepare in advance is reassuring.)

While she was waiting, Porter arrived. Shannon peeked out from the ceiling and stared at Miranda worriedly.

(Good grief, she’s lacking tension.)

Miranda acted blind to her own shortcomings, but when the voices of the monsters came she gestured to Shannon to return back inside the vehicle.

"Captain, incoming!"

Miranda gave instruction in reply.

"Give them a warm welcome."

The archers fired arrows from above the wall. Although, most of them couldn’t handle bow properly. But, they were placed there just to make the enemy hesitated and nothing more.

The monsters found it hard to attack in front of the moat that wasn’t there before, the repaired wall, and the archers.

And then, a path was intentionally prepared in front of the gate.

But, when the monsters passed through it—.

"They’re coming, fire!"

—When they tried to pass through there, the archers fired their arrows. The monsters got pierced by arrows one after another and fell.

The few people who could handle bow were positioned at the sides of the gate to defeat the monsters effectively.

The hippogriff who was watching that happening from the sky cried, then goblins wearing robe came to the front.

The goblins were holding staff and muttered something in low voice. Then, fire balls materialized before getting fired over the wall into the city.

Miranda was inside the city. When she sighted those fire balls, she moved her right hand forward and waved it to the side.

A magic wall of faint light appeared. The magic shield was deployed in a wide range. The fire balls crashed on the shield and they got deflected before vanishing.

"Unfortunate. We've prepared countermeasure for that."

Seeing that the attack wasn't going well, the hippogriff above let out a loud voice.

Then, the monsters rushed all at once toward the gate as though they were ordered to attack.

The knight yelled.

"Captain!"

Miranda guessed what he wanted to say and lifted one hand.

When she heard the sound of the monsters hitting the gate, she swung down her hand.

Then, the gate was thrown open and the monsters rushed in one after another…….

"Yes, thank you for the hard work."

The monsters were falling into the pitfall right after the gate one after another. The pitfall was lined up with sharpened stakes from the materials of the broken buildings. The monsters were getting stabbed one after another.

Even though they tried backing away, the allies coming from behind were pushing them and they fell.

There were also monsters who stepped on their pierced comrades to crawly out from the hole, but the knights and soldiers stabbed them with spear and they lost their life.

"Mine. They’re my prey!"

"MY GOLD COINSSSSS!"

"Where is the next one! The next prey!"

The knights and soldiers were stabbing monsters one after another for money.

Even the monsters flinched back by their fervor. They tried to run away but their back was stabbed.

Miranda looked up to the sky.

"I wonder what it will do next?"

The hippogriff saw Miranda and cried loudly, then it swooped down to attack her.

"Oh, it’s unexpectedly simple."

It was approaching with its front legs spreading out its claws to capture Miranda. Miranda pulled out the short sword hanging on her

waist and leaped aside while throwing it. The sword pierced the hippogriff's body.

For the hippogriff that was as big as a horse, it was like being stabbed by a short sword of that size was meaningless. It leaped at Miranda.

Miranda pulled out a new short sword and this time she slashed while they were passing each other.

She landed her slash firmly, but the wound was shallow for the hippogriff and it didn’t falter.

Perhaps it was underrating Miranda’s attack power, because next the hippogriff attacked again to capture her without fail, but then its movement suddenly turned strange.

Its movement was dulling as though it was paralyzed. The short sword was smeared with poison.

"Do you understand now that human is scary? ……But it’s unfortunate. There is no next time for you."

A knight was running toward Miranda. His hand was holding a large axe.

"Captain, I brought it!"

The knights were working respectfully as though Miranda was their superior from the beginning.

Miranda smiled.

"Thank you. ……Then, I’ll leave the rest to you."

The knight approached the hippogriff who was paralyzed and couldn’t move. He then raised up the large axe and swung it down with his full strength toward its neck.

After swinging down the axe several times for a while, the hippogriff’s head fell.

Most of the monsters were defeated and the gate that Miranda protected was victorious. There were wounded people, but the damage was surprisingly few.

"Now then, it feels like it’ll be busy after this."

Miranda was muttering while staring at the figure of griffon that was observing from afar. The griffon was leaving without doing anything—.

.

After I confirmed Miranda-san’s victory and checked that there wasn’t anyone around, I talked to the Jewel.

"We won."

The Sixth was also greatly satisfied.

[It’s a good start. However, how should I say it, Miranda is really strong. I thought she would be more girly. You know, after all she is Milleia’s great grandchild.]

The Second was holding a doubt.

[Is that so? Somehow her movement was good, perhaps she has talent for this kind of thing. How frightening. More importantly Lyle, defeat the monsters outside too. Give pursue to them.]

I was going to give the instruction following the Second’s words.

But, before that I watched at the direction that I was concerned with.

The griffon was watching this battle with a hippogriff in tow.

"Those guys aren’t trying anything."

[They’re observing. That’s all. They should be considering this town as prey. They’ll surely comes again.]

The griffon and its companion left.

I also had the thought that I didn’t want to see them anymore but, it would be troubling if they moved to a different place and rampaged there. If they weren’t defeated here, the damage would become increasingly greater.

[Come on, give the instruction quickly.]

Being told that by the Second, I hurriedly called a messenger to send the command.

.

After that, there was no movement and we returned to normal work.

As for me, I was facing the soldiers who finished fighting with a table between us. It was for handing over the reward.

I didn’t think that I would do clerical work right away after the victory.

"That’s why, I defeated five. No, it might be seven."

There were also guys who tried to obtain more money by exaggerating their achievement.

I looked at the list while speaking.

"It doesn’t match the number of magic stone we obtained. If you really defeated that many, it means that there are other who is lying in their report."

When I said that, jeers were flying from the surrounding.

"This liar!"

"You didn’t go to the front anyway!"

"You dare stealing other people’s prey!"

Even so the man kept claiming that he defeated many.

"I did it. I really did it! Give me the money. It’s eight gold coins!"

……Wasn’t it increasing than before?

I let out a small sigh, then without delay I grabbed the man’s head.

I used the Third’s Art.

"I’m asking you one more time. Did you really defeat any monster?"

"Eh……aa, I definitely finished off one wounded monster."

His gaze turned blank and he spoke honestly. Hearing that I prepared one gold coin.

The surrounding looked puzzled seeing that, so I grinned.

"Lies won’t work. It’s that kind of Art. The next one trying to lie won’t get paid so be careful."

Those who were planning to inflate their achievement in the report just like this guy averted their gaze from me.

Even so, why did I have to pay the reward right away like this?

The Fourth warned me while I was doing my work in dissatisfaction.

[Lyle, don’t make a dissatisfied face. Listen well. If you show everyone how you’re properly paying their reward like this, then everyone will do their best at the next battle too.]

I continued my work like that, and when I finished paying everyone’s reward I became alone.

I was tired so I rotated my shoulder.

"Even so, the gold coin is running out in an amazing speed. War is really taking a lot of money."

[Eh? Normally you won’t need to pay them like this you know?]

The Third replied as though it was only natural.

"Eh, but—"

[This time is a special case. In the first place, if this is my own territory then I absolutely won’t pick this method.]

"You absolutely won't?"

[It's impossible. Absolutely impossible. See, when human is making comparison they'll compare it with the good time won't they? Well, this time you're being really lavish, but there is no way you'll be able to continue doing this, and the next time if someone else tell them that they'll be paying with the normal rate, they will lose motivation. They will complain that previously they were getting paid a lot more.]

"Isn't that bad?"

[Aa~, it's fine, it's fine. Because this isn't our territory, that'll be the problem of the royal family. After all this is the territory under the direct control of the royal family.]

Even paying reward would become a problem if it was done in excess.

"Will it really be alright?"

[It's fine isn't it? The townspeople need money in order to live, and it's better to obtain money by working rather than receiving money without doing any work. Lyle wants to defeat the griffon. The townspeople want money in order to restore their town. See, it doesn't harm anyone.]

What about the subjugation force? But it was pointless even thinking about it, so I stood up from the chair.

"I wonder when they'll attack next. Will they come soon?"

[I wonder? Even if they're smart they're still monster after all. They aren't thinking like human. Besides—]

The Third made fun of me.

[—Human is scarier than monster though.]

Certainly they were scary.

Just because of a reason of people living in the same capital turning into nuisance, human spread out a fake information and sent others into a dangerous place to die. Compared to that, perhaps what the griffon doing was still cute. ……No, it’s not cute I guess.

Seeing that the work was over, Luka entered the room.

"Lyle-sama, I’m bringing tea."

"Thank you. Just place it there."

I was making Luka to do this kind of chores. What he could do was limited, and making him to work for real would be too harsh.

Luka was looking at the weapons that were placed inside the room.

The swords and spears of the subjugation force. There were also bow and other weapons.

"Are you curious?"

"……I’m thinking if only I can also fight."

I didn’t know what was the good thing to say. Was he thinking to take revenge for his father?

The Second sounded worried.

[Come to think of it he’s a son of hunter. Had he been taught the basic?]

Perhaps because Luka looked similar with his son, the Second couldn’t help but felt concerned.

"Lyle-sama, please let me to fight too. If it’s bow I had been taught a bit by dad. I swear I’ll be useful!"

The Third also seemed to be worried. He sounded unusually troubled.

[I’m happy with his feeling but, absolutely don’t let him get out to the battlefield. But, he won’t accept something like that……]

Both the Second and the Third were extremely soft toward Luka.

While I was feeling troubled—the door was knocked and someone who seemed to be Luka’s mother entered the room. She looked slightly tired, but she was a woman in her twenty with a slim body. I recalled Patto-san saying that she was a prominent beauty in Gioni—.

[—Ah!]

The Sixth’s slightly stupid and surprised voice came.

The Seventh talked to him.

[What’s the matter? Perhaps you remember seeing that woman before? It seems that she’s Luka’s mother……]

I also met her for the first time. She must be coming to check whether Luka was doing his job properly.

"Luka, don’t trouble Lyle-sama. My apologizes. I am Luka’s mother. I came to see how he’s doing because I felt concerned……"

"Be, because"

Luka looked down. Seeing the figure of the mother admonishing him, the Sixth muttered.

[……Gioni. I see, Gioni Village! That’s right. So that’s how it is!]

The Sixth seemed to understand something. Village? This place was a town though…….

[Lyle, Luka is a member of Walt House.]

……Eh?]

.

The location was inside the Jewel.

In order to quickly ascertain the situation, I took a rest and sent my consciousness inside the Jewel. When I arrived at the room of round table, the Sixth was sitting with seiza posture on the floor while the other five were surrounding him.

Everyone was looking down on the Sixth with cold gaze.

[In other words, Luka is a family?]

[Just when I thought that he is really similar, it's actually because he's a blood relative huh. That's convincing. Because he look too similar.]

[A child who you had when running away from home in a village that was taking you in huh……what are you doing?]

[You're an idiot. I asked you! I asked you before if you have any children outside didn't I!?]

[……I thought you told me that I don't have any sibling who I don't know though?]

The Sixth was sitting seiza as though to shrink his large body while hanging his head down.

[A, about your siblings, at that time what I meant was that you don't have any unknown little brother or little sister. Be, besides, I properly left behind money!]

Now that he mentioned it, there was that kind of talk before.

The Second pressed a question in monotone.

[You mean that after impregnating someone, you only left behind money and didn't look after them anymore after that?]

[N, no, there is that. You know, my wives were a bit……]

[And so you abandoned the child you made at other place?]

[……I, I left behind enough money.]

[Other than that, you didn’t do anything else?]

[……Yes.]

I didn’t know how scary those wives were, but the Sixth looked pathetic, or rather the worst.

In conclusion, it seemed that Luka was a child who descended from Walt House’s bloodline.

It seemed there was a period when the Sixth ran away from home before he became the head of the house. Apparently he made a child at that time in Gioni Village.

When he saw Luka’s mother, apparently she was really similar with the woman who he impregnated so he remembered.

The reason why Luka looked really similar with Dewy also became clear with this.

If he was a blood relative then the probability of looking similar would also increase.

"What now?"

Everyone fell silent at my words.

The second scratched his head roughly.

[Now the reason why we can’t abandon him is getting bigger. Lyle, sorry but can you clean up the mess of Walt House—or rather, the mess of the Sixth for us?]

The reason why we couldn’t abandon Luka and his mother and also the town was increasing again. When I nodded, the Seventh grabbed the Sixth’s collar and dragged him up.

[This rotten trash!]

But, the Sixth seemed to be irritated getting complained at by his son the Seventh. He also talked back.

[There are times when the village is presenting a girl to us! Even you, surely you have laid your hand on girl like that!]

[It’s different from laying your hand on a girl on your own initiative and then leaving them behind!]

While I was unable to keep up with their talk, the Third shrugged and said.

[It’s okay that you don’t pay them any attention. More importantly, there’re other things that you should do.]

The Second spoke apologetically to me.

[Lyle……can you teach Luka how to use a bow?]

.

A bow training place was made at the town’s plaza.

In that place that only had simple targets set up, I was teaching Luka how to handle a bow.

Although, I was only speaking as the proxy of the Second’s words.

When Luka fired the arrow, it didn’t hit the target.

"……I’m sorry. I missed."

I gave consoling words to the dejected Luka.

"It’s okay, I’m not expecting you to do it skillfully right from the start. Come on, let’s learn the basic."

Luka was staring at the saber hanging on my waist.

"Lyle-sama, I want you to teach me how to use sword."

"Sword?"

Luka nodded.

"Sword is better than bow. I think I'll be able to defeat a lot more monster that way."

The Second was bewildered.

[No, you're a hunter's son!]

The Third chuckled and advised me.

[Well, he is a boy so sword or spear will look better for him. But, in the future we don't know whether this kid will need a sword or not, I think it's better to teach him bow.]

The Second was complaining to the Third.

[You chose sword though.]

[That's because it was best like that. Look, I was a noble. A feudal lord. It would be no good if I kept using bow forever.]

Bow wasn't really used as a knight's weapon. As expected sword or spear was the mainstream.

[Bow has better performance.]

[It's not a problem of just performance but appearance.]

I was listening to the two's argument while talking to Luka.

"I think that bow will be best if you're a son of a hunter though?"

"……You can't become a hunter just by using bow only. Rather than that, I'll become an adventurer like Lyle-sama."

This was troubling. Somehow the talk was progressing to a strange direction.

The Second somehow squeezed out a breakthrough solution.

[Got it. Then, a hatchet. If it’s sword hatchet then it’ll be convenient using that!]

It ended up becoming a teaching how to handle hatchet, but it seemed that the Second fundamentally wanted to teach bow.

I stroked Luka’s head.

"I understand. Then, I’ll teach you the basic how to use it. But, we’ll also practice using bow. This is my requirement for teaching you."

"Understood!"

Luka replied energetically and brightly. Then we returned to training using bow.

The Sixth also looked happy. After all, Luka might be his grandson after all.

[Haha~, he is a good kid isn’t he.]

The Seventh tsked.

[Truly. When thinking about whose seed he came from, this is practically a miracle. Although, he might grow up to play around when he is older.]

[You, do you hate me that much?]

[Are you telling me to like a parent who threw his son to a bloody battlefield? I don’t have the slightest trust for the Sixth in regard of woman relationship problem.]

[You’re saying that much!?]

Really, just what had the Sixth done in the past?

The Second and the Third were talking about Luka who was drawing his bow.

[He really look the same.]

[His kind side and diligent side too. He is really just like Dewy-niisan.]

The Second muttered.

[I wish……that he'll be happy. For his share too.]

I couldn't say anything.

That was why, I did whatever I could for Luka.

"That's good. After we finish with this I'll let you hold a sword."

"Really!?"

Seeing the happy Luka, I wondered if this was how it felt to have a little brother.

Chapter 74 – The Respective Battlefield

—The next day.

Lionel was accosting Aria.

"Can I take a bit of your time?"

They were in the middle of a break.

Aria was wiping her sweat with a towel.

"I don’t mind but, is there any problem?"

"No, it’s not anything like that. How should I say it……I’m wondering, why are you following someone like Lyle?"

Aria was tilting her head toward Lionel’s question.

"Lyle is the leader. So of course I’ll follow his instruction."

"Tha, that’s not what I mean."

Aria didn’t get what Lionel wanted to say. Because of that, Lionel asked bluntly.

"I mean, why did you become that guy’s comrade? No matter how you look that guy is a no good person isn’t it? He is gathering women around him, then he said that he want high position and fame. He doesn’t has any great cause with him, he’s the worst."

Why was a girl like Aria together with Lyle? These several days, Lionel kept watching Aria all the time so he was puzzled.

She was bright, active, and also helping with the work. Besides she was strong and pretty. There were a lot of men who got interested with her. But, she was Lyle’s comrade so the surrounding didn’t call out to her.

Aria made a complicated expression.

"No, that’s……usually he’ll be calmer. Besides, he isn’t a bad guy, and I was saved by him. I became his comrade also because of that reason."

"Actually I heard about your story. Originally you were from a house of baron weren’t you? If you lived in the capital you must be a capital noble. That guy is a feudal lord noble. He’s a savage."

From the perspective of capital noble, feudal lord noble was barbarian. Even though the royal capital—the king was giving them recognition to own territory, they got haughty attitude. The capital nobles were also hating the feudal lord nobles.

Aria was making a slightly sad face.

"I’m not a noble anymore."

"Yo, you’re a noble. Then, you can marry a noble in the capital. If you do that you’ll be able to return back to a noble right away. You can return to the capital."

Lionel was making his approach, but Aria didn’t get it.

"It’s no use even if I go back after so long. Besides, my life right now is also not bad."

"Adventurers are savage. It’s not a job that a girl like you should do."

"I won’t be able to eat if I don’t work."

The two’s conversation didn’t mesh with each other.

Lionel made his resolve.

"The, then, how about you come with me? I’m a capital noble. My house can pass down its title, and there is also annuity from the palace so there won’t be any need to worry about your livelihood."

Aria was dumbfounded.

"What are you saying? You’re going out with Miranda’s little sister aren’t you?"

"……We aren’t a good match. Besides, Lyle will inherit Circry House anyway. If that’s the case, then I’ll break up with Doris. So if only you agree then"

"No, that’s strange. Even if you can’t inherit the house you can still marry with her right? Besides, it seems you’re misunderstanding but, it’s not like Lyle is aiming to become heir you know?"

"Eh?"

Lionel was shocked hearing that. Porter arrived at that timing. It seemed that it was carrying food at the back. Monica and Shannon came down from it.

"We brought food. You all, line up here quickly~"

"Quickly~"

Noticing the unmotivated Monica and Shannon who was imitating her, Aria put her hand on her stomach.

"I’m hungry. Come on, let’s eat quickly."

Lionel stared at the back of Aria who was walking away while gripping his chest with his hand. He clenched his clothes and his face distorted with frustration—.

.

Three days passed since the first battle.

From early in the morning I climbed on the rooftop of a building where I could look across the town and watched the forest at the distance.

On the map drawn inside my head, a squirming swarm of red dots was moving out from the forest.

"……They're coming. Looks like it's their full force without keeping anything back."

The ancestors were laughing.

[Finally. They really make us wait for long.]

[Now then, it's finally the main show. I'm thrilled.]

[I'm certainly looking forward to it.]

[It's a griffon after all.]

[One-on-one. If possible I want it to become a one-on-one duel.]

[Lyle, the time for you to become an adult too has finally come.]

……These six were like always. If the First was here, would he react the same?

I rang out the bell to notify that the enemy was coming.

The Third's voice sounded excited.

[It was a boring request but, it got an unexpected harvest in it. We told Lyle to accept to teach him how reality is but……to think that he can also experience griffon subjugation at the same time is the best! Lyle, let's have fun!]

……It wasn't fun.

.

—Luka jumped to his feet hearing the bell sound. His mother called out to him.

"Luka, let's hurry to evacuate."

"Ye, yeah."

Actually he also wanted to fight, but it was decided that those who couldn’t fight would evacuate. He quickly finished changing and went outside. There a lot of people already came out.

It was a small town. They immediately arrived at the evacuation site.

It was the biggest building in the town. It was built solidly. Even so it was cramped with several hundred people filling it.

A girl wearing maid uniform that looked like a red dress—Monica was looking after the evacuating people. From the story of the town’s women, her speech and action were a bit strange but she was a hardworker who worked fast and also smart.

"Oh, there you are. With this the evacuation of everyone is finished."

It seemed that Luka and others were the last one.

"Could it be you remember everyone’s face?"

Luka’s mother was surprised how Monica judged that everyone was here. Monica looked smug.

"That much is easy for this Monica. I’ll do everything from looking after everyone until securing their safety. That’s the work that chicken dickwad entrusted to me after all. I’ll complete it perfectly!"

Luka’s mother got a really complicated expression hearing Monica’s smiling reply.

Just in case, there was also Norma here serving as guard. Although, she was simply pushed here by Lyle because he didn’t want the chain of command to be disturbed by her presence at the frontline.

Luka was watching the building’s door getting closed.

(Lyle-sama and others, will they be alright?)

Luka was worried about Lyle—.

.

—The monsters under the leadership of griffon were attacking from four directions.

The griffon was watching the battle from the sky and didn’t look like it would come down.

The battlefield that was entrusted to Sophia was extremely chaotic.

"Why are monsters using this kind of method?"

Orcs and ogres were throwing small monsters over the wall. The monsters that were thrown in one after another were rampaging inside the town.

Sophia was cutting them down with her battle axe, but her allies were in chaos.

The knights were raising their voice.

"Don’t mind them and attack outside the wall!"

"It’s impossible to not mind it when there’s enemy behind us, you stupid idiot!"

In the battlefield where cursing and insult to each other were also resounding, Sophia somehow did what she could.

"Even though Miranda-san was able to do it without problem."

Sophia felt impatient after hearing Miranda’s battle result.

She was comparing herself with Miranda who managed to protect her gate without any reinforcement.

Fire balls were fired from outside the wall one after another. Even goblins and other small monsters were also thrown in. The soldier who got hit by a fire ball rolled around on the spot desperately to extinguish the fire.

"Ho, hot-!"

"Oi, get a hold of yourself!"

One soldier showed his back. A goblin stabbed him from behind with a knife.

"He, help!"

"Kuh!"

She killed the goblin by swinging her battle axe horizontally. Blood splashed from the monster and it collapsed.

"Treat the wound right—"

She tried to save the soldier, but the surrounding was in a chaotic state.

Sophia was flustered.

(What to do? What should I—)

There Porter came charging. It sent the monsters flying and then the rear hatch opened. Soldiers were going out from there. The surrounding cheered at the appearance of allies.

"Reinforcement is coming!"

Sophia was relieved.

They surrounded the monsters with the increase of people and cut them down using superior number.

"I'm glad—ah"

However, this time a lot of fire balls were fired toward Sophia and others.

Without her noticing, Shannon’s figure could be seen on Porter.

"Fufu, it’s finally my turn! Just this much is meaningless in front of me!"

Shannon was usually completely hopeless, but in regard to magic she possessed excellent talent. Shannon who possessed eyes that could see mana spread out her hands widely and repelled all the fire balls.

Magic shield. Sophia could also use it, but unlike Shannon it would be impossible for her to deflect all of them.

"—Amazing."

Clara came down from Porter and approached Sophia.

"I’ll transport the wounded."

"Tha, thank you very much."

(I’m really pathetic. If, I’m stronger—)

When she was finally recovering her composure, the gate was broken through this time—.

.

Compared to before, the monsters were coming with plans.

Like throwing in their ally, no matter how you looked at it, it was strange.

"What are they thinking?"

The Second was telling me to calm down.

[These guys aren’t bothered by harm to their ally after all. It’s pointless to think about it. Even so, both Sophia and Aria are working hard.]

The Second sounded a bit happy.

"We kept sending them reinforcement because they’re in jeopardy though."

Miranda-san’s place and Morris-san’s place were alright. Morris-san also had Eva-san with him.

[Even with that, those two idiots has grown remarkably. I’m looking forward to their future.]

The Second always called the two of them as idiot, but it seemed he actually liked them.

I looked up to the sky.

"……This is the worst."

I unsheathed the saber hanging on my waist.

The griffon and hippogriffs in the sky—I could see them carrying monsters. The monsters they were carrying were large monsters like ogre or orc.

[It’ll be troubling if they don’t do at least that much. Lyle, forestall them.]

.

—The gate Morris and Eva were protecting was going stable.

The experienced Morris were commanding the soldiers using crossbow.

"Aim at the mage using magic first! Remember, aim well!"

Soldiers firing crossbow were grouped with helpers who were reloading the crossbows with arrow. They attacked repeatedly from the wall.

Seeing the orcs trying to throw goblins over the wall, Eva aimed her bow.

"Don’t underestimate an elf with a bow!"

She immediately fired arrows in succession. The thrown goblins were shot through in the air. An arrow also pierced the orc’s head and it collapsed backward.

Behind the wall, the knights opened the gate and lured the monsters in. They thrust their spear from behind a solid wall that was prepared beforehand to defeat the monsters.

Eva was standing on the wall. A goblin armed with bow and arrow shot at her.

Eva ran on the wall that was a bit narrow to dodge, then she fired an arrow without a moment’s delay and killed the goblin.

"Come on, come on, I’m over here~"

Eva was skilled with bow, her legs and waist were strong, and she jumped around like an acrobatic. Morris smiled wryly seeing her.

"Does all elf as strong as you? I’ve to be careful to not make any elf angry from here on."

Eva laughed.

"Oh, I’m especially superior even among the elves you know? After all—oops"

She leaped down from the wall. One hippogriff swooped down aiming at Eva. It destroyed a part of the wall while getting down.

"The big game arrived."

The hippogriff intimidated with a loud cry toward Eva before attacking.

It was charging to capture its prey with its front legs’ claws.

Eva used her agility to dodge, then her right hand moved behind her waist.

And then she took out a specially made arrow from her belonging.

"It’s the trump card I received from Miranda."

She nocked it on her bow. The hippogriff rushed with its eagle’s head—its beak approaching to bite Eva to death.

It didn’t look concerned at all against mere arrow.

The arrow that Eva calmly shot pierced the hippogriff’s head. However, it didn’t reach until its skull. The hippogriff didn’t stop.

"Eva-kun!"

Morris yelled. Everyone readied themselves to see Eva’s death but—.

"I said it. That one is special."

The next instant, the hippogriff suddenly went up in flame. It rolled on the ground and continued to writhe, but the fire didn’t vanish and continued to burn fiercely.

Eva was impressed.

"Oh, it’s really amazing. Magic arrow was it? It’s convenient."

What she received from Miranda was magic arrow that was produced in Arumsaas. It was a special produce that Miranda created and its power was also at a different level.

If it was no good Eva also considered using magic to defeat the hippogriff, but even she never expected that it would end with just one shot.

The hippogriff became scorched and died.

Eva put her hand on her chin.

"The lovely elf archer, no, the gorgeous perhaps? It’ll be nice if there is also a song about my activity!"

Morris yelled.

"Eva-kun! I'll listen about that later, so help us now!"

The gate that Eva and Morris were protecting was defeating monsters without any problem—.

.

—Changing the place, the gate that Aria was protecting.

This place was terribly chaotic.

"THIS BASTARDDDDDD!"

Aria leaped and stabbed an orc with her spear. It deeply pierced a vital spot. Blood spurt showered her when she pulled her spear out.

They had used the prepared trap too, but the orc that a hippogriff dropped caused the place to fall into disorder.

The hippogriff observing the situation at the ground while flying in the sky was also troublesome.

Sometimes it would swoop down and returned to the sky after grabbing a person. And then an ally's corpse would fall.

"Haa, haa……"

She was dirtied with blood but she had no leeway to be bothered about it. Monsters were thrown in one after another. And then she was also struggling to deal with the magic that were fired in.

A knight was deploying magic barrier, but the magic pierced through and fell on the town.

The trap was destroyed by an orc. The situation was continuing in one where they were barely holding on.

Then she heard a voice.

"So, someone!"

When she turned around, Lionel was being attacked by a goblin. A goblin was mounting him while trying to stab him with a knife. He was barely pressing back its hand while crying and screaming for help.

Aria used her Art and instantly closed the distance. She stabbed the gobbling and lifted it up, then she swung her spear with brute force to fling the goblin.

The goblin came off from the spear and fell on the ground. Aria offered her hand to Lionel.

"Can you stand? Pick up your weapon—"

But, Lionel’s face distorted in fear seeing Aria was smeared with blood. He moved back while still sitting on the ground and screamed.

"Hiiii!"

He screamed pathetically and ran away. Aria reached out to him but, she pulled back her hand.

(Aa, I see. It’s because I’m soaked with blood.)

She fixed her grip on her weapon and looked around. She was looking if there was any ally who needed help, then this time an ogre came down from the sky.

The hippogriff brought it from outside.

"Doing this troublesome thing again."

Aria leaped to the front of the ogre. However, the ogre didn’t even look at Aria and destroyed the gate. The trap was already broken and didn’t function. The monsters were entering into the town one after another.

"This is the worst."

In front of the monsters that were coming in droves, knights and soldiers were getting cold feet.

Aria raised her spear and went forward.

However, she didn’t have any way to defeat a great amount of monster.

(I can’t breathe. My body is heavy. My weapon is slippery with blood I can’t hold it firmly. This might be really dangerous.)

When she stabbed a goblin that jumped at her, her spear broke.

Although she immediately prepared other weapon, there was only the short sword on her waist. The length of the blade was quite long, but her handling of it was inferior compared to using a spear.

"If only, I’m stronger—"

Aria muttered.

(At this kind of time, if that guy—Lyle come fore me. For me to think something like that, I’m unexpectedly a maiden. But, right now I want even more strength. Strength that even that guy can rely on.)

When she was lamenting her pathetic self, the red Gem hanging on her neck emitted faint light.

Red light enveloped Aria.

"—!"

The hippogriff observing in the sky cried, then the monsters assaulted Aria and others the humans.

An ogre raised its voice and swung down the club it held on Aria.

The next moment Aria—vanished from that spot.

The club hit the ground and shook the surrounding, but Aria’s figure wasn’t there.

The ogre moved its head to search for Aria. Blood splashed behind it.

When it turned around, it saw other monsters getting cut apart and fell with blood spurting out. The ogre opened its eyes wide from that unbelievable sight and stood still on the spot.

The knights and soldiers also didn’t understand what was going on.

"Wha, what?"

"Where did the red haired girl vanish to—"

"Oi, over there!"

Aria got behind the monsters and picked up a fallen spear of her ally.

(Aa, I understand. I see, so I’m finally recognized.)

The red Gem was emitting a faint glow, granting Arts to Aria. The spear she picked was an inferior good and felt more brittle compared to the spears Aria used until now.

Aria grasped that spear and took a stance. Then, the spear’s color changed gradually from the places that she touched. Before long the spear was tinged with metallic luster, its texture was also becoming metal itself.

Aria swung it around.

"Yep, it has good vibes. It’s not slippery and feel fit with my hands."

She hardened the weapon using Art—a mere spear changed into a spear that was made from metal.

An ogre yelled. Monsters swarmed toward Aria. Aria swung her spear before the monsters entered her range. Then blood spurted up once more.

The monsters outside the range fell down on the ground in great number. Aria watched that while putting her spear on her shoulder.

"Aa, this is certainly convenient. But, it’s really tiring."

The Gem in Aria’s possession had memorized the Arts of the women of Lockwarde House for generations. One Art was weapon strengthening, another one was an Art to let a slash flew.

There were two more.

Aria grasped her right hand.

"Amazing. Strength is welling up."

Her hand was making creaky sound. It was a simple body strengthening Art, but its aggressiveness was different from the Art that Lyle had.

Her physical ability was drastically increased while she was accelerated by her own Art. Blood spurted and drifted in the air at the place that Aria passed through.

Her allies were surprised.

"Wha, what’s that?"

"Lies. It only looked like something red was passing through."

"Wha, what a terrifying woman."

The hippogriff watching from the sky flew down vigilantly, but Aria cut down the monsters on the ground before that and jumped on an ogre.

She grabbed the ogre’s head and snapped it, then without pause she used its body as jumping point to leap toward the sky.

"This is, Lockwarde House’s, my—"

The last Art was an Art to unleash an attack of full power.

When the hippogriff tried to run away in surprise, Aria was approaching before its eyes. Aria wildly struck the hippogriff using her strengthened spear.

"—POWERRRRRR!"

The spear was smashed into pieces, but the hippogriff’s head was also smashed at the same time.

When Aria yelled at the sky, the knights and the soldiers raised their cheers—.

.

—Sophia raised her right hand to the sky.

She was breathing hard. Her hair was messy and dirty with soil and blood.

The gate was broken through and monsters were rushing in. that situation wasn’t a good situation for Sophia and other people there. However, cheers were rising from the surrounding.

"A, awesome."

"The monsters are—"

—Kneeling on the ground.

The monsters entering the town. But, when Sophia raised one hand, the monsters suddenly turned slow.

Even the hippogriff flying at the sky fell to the ground and writhed.

Clara was surprised.

"Don’t tell me, Art? The second stage in this timing?"

Sophia had an Art to manipulate weight, but it was limited to herself and the object she touched. However, that performance was increased remarkably with the liberation of the second stage.

Sophia’s Art possessed the power enough to press the monsters flat on the ground.

However, her breathing was rough and her expression was fatigued.

"Fi, finish them quickly. The time is……"

Clara yelled to the knights.

"Please finish them off quickly. There is no time!"

"Go, got it!"

Armed knights and soldiers swung down their weapon to the monsters.

Shannon didn’t like that sight and escaped inside Porter.

Sophia used her battle axe as a cane and somehow kept her body standing.

Knights and soldiers surrounded the hippogriff and swung their weapon down, finishing it.

"Crush its heart properly. These guys have powerful vitality after all. It’ll stand again if you do it half-way."

"Understood."

The finishing blow was dealt thoroughly. When everything was over, Sophia almost fell and she was supported by Clara.

"Sophia-san! We’ll head to Novem-san’s place right away."

Sophia looked at her palm.

(Ha, have I……become slightly stronger?)

Sophia closed her eyes while looking at the defeated monsters and the cheering allies—.

.

I was in front of two orcs.

They were the monsters that the hippogriffs dropped down.

The orcs had weapon that they took away from humans' hand, but I lured them to between buildings so they couldn't swing around their hand and finished them off using saber one by one.

When I looked up to the sky there was only a griffon and a hippogriff there.

"The other hippogriffs headed to the gates huh."

When I checked the situation using Arts, red dots and blue dots were mixed in. I could see that the situation was progressing favorably, but there was also harm to our side.

The Fifth gave me the next instruction.

[Take care of the problem from the thing that you can do now. There is still ogre remaining.]

It wasn't just orc that the hippogriff dropped.

I somehow finished off the orcs, but the ogre left during that time.

When I checked the location…….

"This is bad. Over there is—"

It was the place where the townspeople evacuated to and also the facility where the wounded were kept.

.

—Novem was healing the wounded who were brought in.

The townswomen were helping her.

"It hurt. It hurt."

She rushed to a crying soldier and closed the wound with magic.

The woman who saw that was surprised.

"The wound is healed this cleanly. Magic is really amazing."

The treatment was over and the soldier lost consciousness. Seeing that Novem gave the woman her instruction.

"Please wipe his body clean. After that, prepare food and water after he rest for a while."

If the wounded soldier wasn’t seriously injured, they would return back to battle again after resting.

There were also people who felt scared and didn’t want to return outside, but there were also people who grabbed their weapon and tried to go outside despite being heavily injured. Several people would hold down such person, this place was also a battlefield.

When Novem wiped her sweat, a yelling voice came from the entrance.

"KYAAAAAAA!"

There, a woman was falling on her butt.

Ahead of that woman, an ogre was crouching down and peeking inside. It half opened its large mouth and drool was trickling down.

The people were in mayhem. Novem rushed forward during that time.

"Please back away. Don’t stay in front of me!"

Novem held her staff to protect the wounded and the townspeople. The ogre saw Novem and stopped moving.

Without pause it then stepped back and left to somewhere to escape.

The women were relieved and sat down on the spot.

"I felt my lifespan shrinking."

"They are fighting such thing outside huh."

"I can’t stop trembling from the terror."

Novem put down her staff and returned to healing quietly—.

.

—The ogre headed to the evacuation site next.

It sniffed human smell from the building and hit the door with its club.

After the door was destroyed, it saw a lot of human hiding inside.

The ogre grinned. It swung up its club in order to destroy the entrance further so it could enter inside. However, a girl came forward.

"Another big one come. Orc is also big but, this ogre’s size might reach three meter. However! This Monica, she is ordered to protect this place by chicken dickwad. I won’t let you pass from here!"

The ogre didn’t pay it any mind and reached out with its hand to capture her and crush her in its hand.

For some reason she didn’t smell like human but he didn’t pay that any mind.

When it almost grabbed her, the woman took out a large hammer from somewhere.

The woman swung it up, and then swung it down on the ogre’s hand. The ogre pulled back its hand in pain and screamed.

"Only chicken dickwad can touch me!"

The ogre who got its flesh and bone smashed glared at the woman.

When it tried to hit her with its club, it was deflected back with the hammer. The woman showed greater power than the ogre with that small body.

"This Monica possess full mastery of maid battle art. Regret that you encounter me here!"

Before long the ogre’s head was smashed with hammer and its consciousness ended there—.

I rushed to the evacuation site and found an ogre lying on the ground.

Its head was crushed and beside it Monica was standing with a large hammer in one hand.

"Ah, chicken dickwad~"

I was exasperated at Monica who was waving her hand lightheartedly.

"How can you smile in this kind of situation?"

"It’s because it’s this kind of situation. I want to send the best smile to chicken dickwad everyday!"

"I see. More importantly, there isn’t anyone injured right?"

"That’s cold. That’s also great though. Putting that aside, there isn’t anyone injured. This Monica is carrying the order faithfully."

"That’s good. Novem’s place is also alright, so—"

Monica held the hammer with both hands and looked to the sky.

"Chicken dickwad, incoming!"

I also looked up. There, a hippogriff’s figure was approaching.

I took distance from that spot. The swooping down hippogriff trampled the ogre’s corpse powerfully. Did it has no awareness to each other as fellow monster or ally?

I raised my saber and glared at the hippogriff.

The hippogriff furrowed its eyebrows in anger.

"What, are you angry that your comrade got killed? Then don’t step on it."

The entrance of the evacuation site was destroyed. From there I could see the evacuated townspeople being scared by the hippogriff.

[Lyle, get away from this place. It’s dangerous to fight here.]

I slightly nodded at the Second’s calm voice and took a knife with my left hand that I threw to the hippogriff.

The hippogriff deflected it with its front leg, but I didn’t expect the knife to hit anyway.

"Come on, follow me you bird bastard."

The hippogriff cried loudly and charged at me. Perhaps because its lower body was mostly like a horse, it could run fast even on the ground.

It aimed at me who ran away while showing it my back.

"That’s good, come. Follow me!"

Monica was chasing after me and the hippogriff.

"Ah, idiot. You standby there!"

"Where!? My first priority is at chicken dickwad’s—"

It seemed she abandoned her work after sensing a danger at me. Spare me from that.

"Protect the townspeople! I’ll be fine!"

I used Art to increase my moving speed and took distance from that place. The hippogriff was following me. I took out a clay from my belonging.

When I came out to the biggest street inside the town, I turned around and looked at the hippogriff.

The hippogriff flapped its wings and crouched down in preparation of leaping forward—.

"Fire Bullet"

—I pointed my left hand forward and chanted out magic that fired out fire ball.

But, a flame of this level wouldn’t do anything against hippogriff. The fire ball burst and burned, but the monster didn’t flinch to such little fire. The fire was vanishing bit by bit.

It had fur that was really resistant toward fire. It was difficult to burn but……I was convinced that I won.

"You’ve got to pay attention to below you."

I saw the hippogriff stepped on the clay that I dropped. That was why, I fired magic without considerable power. The clay caused explosion due to the magic.

The clay was Miranda-san’s specially made product—an explosive.

The hippogriff was blown away by the explosion and lost one front leg and one wing. Even so, seeing that it was still twitching, it looked like it was alive. It was tenacious. However, it was over already.

I was breathing roughly so I calmed myself down.

"I, I did it."

The Seventh was satisfied.

[Wonderful. That much power from that amount. If it’s improved then its power will increase even more. Now then, you’ve got to finish it off.]

When I was about to finish it off, Lionel came near the hippogriff.

"You, what are you doing in this kind of place?"

Lionel stabbed the dying hippogriff several times with the sword he had. He seemed to be deranged, his face was a bit scary.

"Me. I defeated this one. I’m not going to hand it to anyone! The fifty gold coins is mine!"

He stabbed the hippogriff over and over with his sword. Then he pointed his sword at me. He said that it was his and wouldn’t let me approach.

[Acting troublesome at time like this.]

The Second was irritated. I was nervous wondering if he would tell me to kill him.

"Got it. That’s your achievement. Finish it properly okay."

Lionel was laughing. He was laughing with spasming face and continued whispering that fifty gold coins belonged to him.

The Third was exasperated.

[This guy was posted at another place wasn’t it? Could it be he deserted in the face of enemy? —Oh?]

While facing the ghastly Lionel, the sound of bell that notified everyone of emergency could be heard.

"This direction……Miranda-san’s place? Lionel, you finish off that hippogriff properly okay!"

I hurriedly headed toward Miranda-san’s location.

.

—When Lyle left, Lionel looked down at the hippogriff.

"I’ve stabbed it many times, and it also lost its front leg. Its wing is also blown away so it’s alright already isn’t it?"

He looked at his trembling hand. Dark shadow was created under his eyes.

His hand that was holding the sword’s handle wouldn’t listen to him. The hand was strongly grasping the sword and wouldn’t let go.

"……That’s right. I defeated a hippogriff. With this I’ll be hero when I return. I’ll even be welcomed as the heir of the viscount house."

Lionel left from there with his hand still holding the sword.

"I’ll also boast at Aria. That’s right. I didn’t run away. I was fighting with a hippogriff. That’s why, I’ll tell Aria to open her eyes already. Surely she will see me in better light."

Lionel was smiling while walking with unsteady steps. It was like he was going mad.

When he was gone from view, the hippogriff opened its eyes—.

Chapter 75 – Griffon

—Miranda was in a hard fight.

"This might be a bit hard."

At the beginning she was able to face the enemy with composure, but something happened that made the situation changed drastically.

It was the griffon.

Other than the corpses of orcs and ogres nearby, there was also the corpse of a hippogriff lying on the ground.

The golems she created with her Art were facing the griffon.

She created a black spider and panther. Both of them were bigger than six meter, but they were forced into a hard battle against the griffon.

When the griffon opened its mouth widely and let out a loud voice, the surrounding allies would cover their ears. Even Miranda felt pained in her ears.

"You've been noisy since some time ago!"

She sent her spider to rush it, sent her panther to jump on it, and Miranda herself was throwing her special knives at it.

The griffon trampled the spider, and shook free from the panther biting on its body.

The blade of the knives Miranda threw was created from clay. When it touched the griffon's body, the knife would stick on the body and caused explosion.

"……This is really frustrating."

The griffon was slowly walking out from the smoke that was caused by the explosion. The golem in the form of panther was grabbed by its front leg and then it was crushed in its grip. The golem turned into sand and vanished.

The spider was also stepped on and vanished. There was no more wall in front of Miranda.

(Even my golem lost in power. I also used up all the explosives I brought, can I make do somehow with my remaining tools?)

It was going well until the middle.

She used her tools like explosive and directed the battle to an advantageous direction. But, the situation was overturned with the griffon's entrance.

The griffon didn't even show any sign of getting damaged.

(Honestly speaking I was underestimating it. I thought I can do it because the hippogriff was defeated easily but……certainly anyone who can defeat this can be called a hero.)

It was completely different in everything compared to hippogriff.

Miranda let out string from her left hand. She formed a net with her sticky string and threw it to the griffon.

When the griffon stirred due to the sticky sensation, the net entangled it.

She threw several more nets to seal its movement, but the griffon forcefully spread out its wings and flapped, shaking its body. The strings were scattered to the surrounding with that.

"This thing, isn't cute at all."

While Miranda was luring the griffon, her allies brought the prepared net.

"Captain, please leave it to us!"

The net was thrown by the knight’s order and the griffon was captured. The knights and soldiers pulled the rope connected to the net.

"You won’t be able to move with this!"

The griffon didn’t even try to dodge. Mrianda ordered everyone.

"Let go of the rope right away!"

"—Heh? NUWAAAA!"

When the griffon swung its body, dozens of men holding the rope were swung around and sent flying.

The griffon then freed itself by cutting apart the net using its beak and claws, and then it opened its mouth just slightly. That face looked like it was laughing.

"It got bad personality."

Miranda used the time that the soldiers bought her to form the framework of golem around her. The surrounding ground rose up and clung on the framework as flesh.

Her form that was clad in golem was like when she fought Lyle.

A spider woman like arachne.

"This isn’t a form that I really want to display, so I’ve got to finish this quickly."

The griffon stooped down and leaped after seeing Miranda’s figure. With its speed, the distance had been closed when she noticed. Griffon’s largely opened mouth was approaching.

Miranda’s upper body came out from the spider’s head part.

The golem’s arms were big and the legs were eight spider legs.

She ran backward on the ground to take distance, but the griffon's movement was fast. When the griffon swung its front leg and its claws hit the ground, that part was gouged.

"You-!"

She jumped to get above the griffon, but the griffon leaped backward and ran to the sky.

When she looked up, the griffon swooped down and grabbed Miranda's lower body before moving to soar to the sky once more.

(No good! I've to cancel this right away—)

If she got carried high to the sky, she would be tortured to death there or thrown to the ground. Miranda wanted to avoid that and dispelled her golem. She fell to the ground.

The distance to the ground wasn't that great, but the griffon attacked Miranda in the middle of her fall. Miranda who couldn't move midair wrapped a string from her right hand to the griffon to forcefully change her trajectory.

She escaped from the claws with a movement like a pendulum. She cut off the string and took distance from the griffon.

When she tried to land, the momentum was too strong and she rolled around on the ground, but she quickly stood up. However—.

"……This monster is really abnormal."

The griffon was already coming down right beside Miranda.

It lifted its front leg to tear apart Miranda with its claws.

(—Not yet!)

The instant she was about to take her next action.

"I WON'T LET YOUUUUUU!"

"Lyle!?"

Lyle came running and landed a knee strike with all his strength on the griffon's head—.

.

While running at full speed, I saw the griffon approaching Miranda-san.

It was trying to tear apart Miranda-san with its front leg's claws. I exerted even more strength to run and prevented that from happening—and noticed that I didn't bring any weapon.

If it was like this then for now I'd just send the griffon flying. Using the Jewel's power—I used Arts and strengthened my body and kicked the ground.

I was thinking to kick the griffon's head, but my momentum was too strong I couldn't adjust my posture and landed a knee strike.

However, it was a clean hit. That was why, there was no problem!

[That's why I told you to bring your weapon!]

[What're you doing, Lyle?]

[It's good that you make it in time when Miranda is in a pinch.]

[Yosh, continue right away to the griffon subjugation.]

[Lyle, you're thrilled right!?]

[This is one majestic griffon! It's worthy to be prey!]

Perhaps because it was hit by my knee strike in full strength, the griffon escaped to the sky.

It was searching for the one kicking it from the sky. When it saw me in front of Miranda-san, it bared its claws in anger and noisily cried 'gyaa gyaa, kii kii' noisily.

……My ears hurt.

Miranda-san explained the situation behind me.

"You saved me. It went well until the middle but, that guy came and acted as it pleased. I'm also worn out. It's the first time I'm cornered by this much since Lyle."

"It's that strong?"

"It's at different level from hippogriff. Or perhaps it's at different dimension. Even I am completely helpless. Even after using up most of the tools I had, I only managed to scratch it."

"……That's terrifying."

Miranda-san was looking really tired.

"For now let's buy time. Perhaps we'll be able to defeat it somehow if we surround it."

I really wanted to do just that but, the fellows inside the Jewel were noisy. Since some time ago they were clapping their hands rhythmically saying"One-on-one! One-on-one!".

I looked back and smiled.

"Sorry. One-on-one fight is Walt House's style."

Miranda-san opened her mouth wordlessly from surprise at the beginning, and then.

"Lyle, you'll die."

"I've no plan to die. Well, I'll manage somehow so during that time please reorganize the troops."

I wished Miranda-san would get back on her feet as well as doing something about this situation.

The battle was still not over after all.

"Now, come—this bird bastard chief."

.

—Monica returned to the evacuation site and confirmed the situation. Her expression darkened.

"……To think that boy who I thought as someone reasonable would go outside."

Luka’s mother was apologizing to Monica.

"I’m sorry. He was gone when I took off my eyes from him for a bit. That boy, he saw Lyle-sama being chased by hippogriff."

They gave up fixing the entrance and put up a barricade there.

(……I should go searching for him but, I also can’t leave this place.)

She couldn’t expose everyone who was evacuated here to danger just for the sake of Luka alone.

(Even telling chicken dickwad is impossible because he is in the middle of battle right now. It’s also problematic that I can’t leave this place, and above all else……)

Ahead of her gaze, there was Norma trembling from seeing hippogriff and ogre from close by.

She would be useless like this.

(It also doesn’t look like she can be entrusted with sending message.)

Monica prioritized protecting this place just like the plan at first—.

.

Thinking carefully, wasn’t it a mistake to face a large monster using thin sword like saber?

The griffon that was so big I needed to look up to it had a large head of eagle and the lower body of a lion……it was a monster with four legs despite being a bird.

It also had large wings.

The saber I had felt unreliable.

If I was asked what I wanted to say, this wasn’t a creature to be challenged by a single human.

It was shouting *Kuwaaah!* or *Guwaaah!* while thrusting its large beak at me.

Its movement was also fast. That strength could open a hole if it crashed on a building’s wall.

"Don’t screw around! How do you fight this kind of thing!?"

[You can do it!]

[Show your guts. Guts!]

[Pathetic. There’re many things you can try.]

[Isn’t it great because you can’t defeat it easily?]

[Lyle, can’t you show how you’ve grown up slightly?]

[This is a path that us and also our predecessors had walked. By the way, it seemed that in the past people even defeated it barehanded.]

I’m different from you guys, I’m not a savage who would challenge this fight barehanded.

The griffon extended its front legs at me. Its rear legs were certainly lion’s legs, and yet its front legs were the legs of bird. The claws were approaching so I rolled to dodge while slashing but—.

"Hard!"

The sensation was different when I slashed.

I rolled and ran around, and then I only attacked bit by bit.

In that case. I changed my grip on my saber and stepped deeply toward the approaching griffon and thrust my blade. The blade cut apart the griffon's skin and entered for several centimeter but—.

"Shit!"

I was the one unable to endure and pulled out my blade. Even the flesh was hard. I got fed up and pointed my left hand.

"Thunder Bullet!"

I fired my magic. It created crackling sound and light attacked the griffon. But it charged at me without any considerable damage.

I escaped with a dash.

"GOD DAMN ITTTTT!"

The pursuing griffon leaped to the sky.

When I turned around and took a stance, the Second gave me advice.

[Calm down. Lyle, certainly the enemy is big and strong. It's honestly powerful.]

I calmed my breathing's roughness.

[But you see……in this world there is no monster who can't die. No matter what kind of monster it'll have vital spot and weak point.]

I got it. However, griffon and dragon that would make you got treated as hero if you defeated them were race with few such weak point. Because of that I was troubled like this.

I tightly grasped the Jewel.

It would be easy if I could just finish it off with the First's great sword, but it was difficult to handle that great sword that was like a

raging horse. It would be great if it hit the griffon, but it would be scary if I missed.

The great sword would take away all my mana with one swing. If I missed, I would collapse in front of the griffon.

It would be great if I could approach near and landed a hit, but in the first place such attack—would be something the griffon was on alert against.

I looked up at the griffon that was circling above me.

"Close range. If I can get into a close range……that's right. If I can ride on that guy's back"

I got an idea. What should I do to carry it out—.

The griffon was flying in circle above, but then it showed a posture of swooping down toward me. In that timing I held my saber in my mouth by biting it.

I emptied both my hands and took a rope that fell near me. Its length was also enough, and it was also solid.

The Sixth spoke [Hou] in admiration, but right now I had no leeway to talk.

The griffon nosedived. It fell vertically, and then it spread open its wings to fly straight at me.

Fast. If I lost focus I would be captured by those claws, or a hole would be opened in my body. Or perhaps I would be blown away into pieces.

I used my Arts in full power.

My body was making ripping sound and bluish white flame blazed from my body. It wasn't a flame that was burning my body. It was the last stage of the First's Art.

I measured the distance using the Second's Art.

I focused all my mind and crouched to wait the griffon in order to decide the battle here.

I exerted all my strength. I wouldn’t be able to do the same thing multiple times.

The griffon thrust its front leg to capture me. In that instant, I held the rope with both arms and formed a circle—and placed it around the griffon’s neck. I imagined strangling its neck.

Because I was focusing, the surrounding’s motion felt slow.

The expression, movement, all those things of the approaching griffon looked clear.

I kicked the ground and leaped to mount the griffon’s back.

The griffon rampaged.

The griffon tried to shake me off from its back. I held its torso tightly using my thighs and tightened the rope while handling it like a rein.

"I chaughf fhouu"

I was biting my saber so I couldn’t speak clearly, but I wanted to say ‘I caught you’.

I used the rope to strangle the neck of the bird bastard that had put me through many hardships using all my strength.

The griffon cried while rampaging.

It felt like riding a raging horse.

However, it smelled worse than a horse. Even though I was riding a griffon, rather than feeling happy the smell was making me disillusioned. In addition the lion torso looked like it was covered with bushy fur, but it was strangely sticky. The texture was the worst.

The rampaging griffon charged to a building and smashed through the wall, even so I didn’t let go.

I strangled the griffon with all my strength. It seemed to be suffering. A lot of drool was flowing from its mouth.

The griffon flew up.

—Troublesome.

"I whon’t lhet fhou"

I squeezed out my mana and used magic in full power. Fire would burn the rope. Lightning was the same.

In that case, the best option among the remaining options would be water.

"Water……Storm!"

Water spouted out from the ground and whirled to envelop me and the griffon. The force was great and created a water tornado that even the griffon couldn’t oppose. The inside was like a storm in the sea. We were intensely swung around and unable to breath.

My body was brought toward the sky fast.

When I noticed, I could see the cloud. We were launched until a place at the same height with the cloud.

……I overdid it.

[……What’s this?]

The Third’s astonished voice.

The Second was also unable to hide his surprise.

[Eh, magic? The water tornado just now was Lyle’s magic?]

I was also surprised. To think that it would be this powerful, I never even imagined it. Anyway my eyes were swirling. It felt like I would fall from the griffon’s back if I lost focus.

When I looked below, the town where we were fighting looked really small. I was made to realize that I was fighting in a really small place.

The griffon seemed to be losing its sense of direction too from getting suddenly launched up. It was hovering unsteadily in the sky. It barely maintained a sense of balance to fly.

Right now was a chance, but if I finished off the griffon in this height then I would also fall and lost my life.

My mana was also at the limit. I also didn't feel like I would be able to do something skillful like using magic one more time to reduce my falling speed.

It was extremely cold because I was high in the sky while soaking wet.

My breath was white. It felt like my stamina was taken away along with my body temperature. Even the blue flame blazing out from my body was vanishing.

My limit was also near.

The griffon was slowly decreasing its altitude.

I wished that we could arrive on the ground slowly like this, but before that this guy might return to its senses and shook me off.

My sight looked hazy.

At that time—.

[Lyle, aim at the heart.]

I heard the Second's voice.

[These guys are simply tough. Especially the like of griffon, it's not rare for them to keep rampaging for a while even after their body is pierced through. A stab into the heart. If you do that, even if

this guy weaken it should be able to continue flying somehow. It'll lose any leeway to mind about you.]

Heart……even if I was told that I didn't know where it was located.

[You have my Art aren't you? Sharpen your senses, then you should be able to sense even the opponent's heartbeat.]

The Second's Art was conveying the state of inside the enemy's body to me.

I let go of the rein and grabbed my saber.

[Aim at the gap between the bones from its back and stab. You get it? Finish it off with one attack.]

"……Yes."

When he concentrated, it felt like he could see until inside the griffon's body. He felt the beat of the pulsing heart and he even understood the position of the bones accurately.

Thick skin and thick fur.

In order to pierce through those, he grabbed the saber's hilt with both hands—and stabbed the blade with all his strength.

The blade aiming toward the heart from the back pierced inside the griffon's body and its tip reached the heart. The saber stabbed in until the limit.

Then, the griffon rampaged around. Even now with its heart pierced, the griffon was still resisting. He could only feel astonished. The saber was still stabbed. The more it rampaged the wider the wound became, and yet it didn't quiet down even then.

Within the cold air, the griffon's blood showered me. the blood was warm.

I gripped the saber with all my strength.

"Even if the outside is no good if it’s inside—what about thiissss!"

I fired magic without holding back anything. Electricity was produced from my body. It flowed through the saber into the griffon’s body.

The rope strangling the griffon’s neck burned into ash due to the electrical discharge. I wrung out the remaining mana from my body and converted it all into magic. Lightning was overflowing from my body like sparks that scattered to the surrounding.

Even then the griffon continued resisting. The strength of its vitality was absurd.

The griffon cried remarkably loudly and gave off the burnt smell.

"Not yet, NOT YETTTT!"

The griffon was rampaging, but the electricity flowing from the stabbed saber burnt the inside of its body, and then it spasmed and spewed out white smoke from its mouth.

The magic was gradually receding and I who was breathing roughly was also at my limit.

When I pulled out the saber, the smell of burnt meat came from inside the griffon’s body. Above the sky, the white smoke must be water vapor. The smoke was blown away by strong wind.

At this point, the griffon’s movement was finally becoming frail.

I looked at my saber.

"I heard that it’s good quality weapon but……it really endured well."

It didn’t snap when used to face griffon, and then it also endured my magic. This saber was really reliable.

[Lyle, great job!]

The Second praised me. His words were warm and happy as though he was feeling joy for something he had done himself.

With a sorrowful shout, the griffon cried high in the sky—its voice reverberated far away and it began to struggle. It flapped its wings as though resisting from simply falling down. It was struggling with everything it had. What was different from before was how frail it felt.

When the ground was getting near, I could see the town's outer wall.

"Over there is—the place where Aria-san is at?"

It looked like the battle was over.

There was sign of the soldiers going out of the city because there was no need to be on guard toward the sky anymore and fought the monsters there.

All four sides were victorious.

—In other words, it was our victory.

[What, so even Aria and Sophia were working hard.]

The Second's voice sounded happy.

I was already near my limit, I stopped using Arts and clung on the griffon.

The griffon was flying on the sky unsteadily and approached the outer wall. The griffon became unable to even control its direction and crashed hard through the wall.

I was thrown away to the air by the impact.

"Lyle!"

The one who leaped and caught me was the blood soaked Aria-san. Aria-san’s warmth was transmitted to my freezing body.

Aria-san landed on the ground with a slide.

"Aa, finally the ground."

"Lyle, you’re soaked wet! Besides you’re cold for some reason."

Right now I was unable to say things like feeling shy or the like.

When I turned my gaze to the griffon, it was surrounded by knights and soldiers who were watching the situation. It didn’t look like it was alive at all, but it helped that they were still on their guard even then.

Inside Aria-san’s arms—it was warm and pleasant.

"……Please let me be like this for a bit. It was really cold I couldn’t stand it."

Aria-san’s face was bright red.

"……It’s fine but, I’m dirty from the blood spurt all over me."

"Aa, you don’t need to worry about that. I’m also smeared in blood, in addition there is also this animal smell. I’m soaked wet and it’s cold."

It had become evening when I noticed. I could see grey cloud at the sky.

"Looks like I’m still in better state than you. Come on, I’ll lend you a shoulder so stand up. You’ll catch a cold at this rate. I’ll bring you to where everyone is."

"Thank you."

I felt relieved thinking that it was finally over. Tension left my body and my strength was also vanishing all at once. However, I didn’t lose my consciousness like usual. I felt happy just from that.

I could even hear applauses from inside the Jewel.

[With this Lyle is also an adult. There isn't anything else that I can teach him.]

[Well~, I wonder about that. After all he is still ignorant of the world after all.]

[There're a lot of things that he still has to learn, but with this Lyle is also an adult.]

[The griffon was really big and strong. Like this there isn't anything to complain about.]

[You're right. However, at my era it was a powerful griffon that was bigger and more cunning—]

[Please leave your bragging for later. Lyle, you did great. As expected from a man of Walt House.]

……These people were really noisy. They were also, people who could be relied on. They were always noisy and free. It was bothersome for me who got bossed around by them but……it didn't feel lonely.

Compared to when I was in the mansion, it was really warm. I felt happiness even from this noisiness.

"Lyle, can you stand?"

"Somehow."

I borrowed Aria-san's shoulder and stood up, then I could see Luka's figure at the distance.

"Eh……why is he outside?"

.

—Luka rushed out from the evacuation site.

It was because he was anxious about Lyle's safety.

"Err, if I climb to a high place then I'll be able to find him right away—"

For Luka who lost his father, Lyle who was looking after him was an existence who was like an elder brother. When he asked him why he was acting kind to him, he said "A request from some people, and atonement, I guess?".

He didn't really get it but, Luka himself also felt closeness with Lyle.

He saw such Lyle getting chased by a hippogriff. He became uneasy and went out because he was still childish.

He climbed to a high place in the town with his small body. There was an old watch tower there. Because it was tattered and in the verge of crumbling, Lyle didn't choose that place as the spot to take command from. A part of the wood was rotting. It would creak and shook if an adult climbed it.

But, a child like Luka could climb it. He was told by his parents that it was dangerous, but the children of the town were always playing there. It was also a familiar place for Luka.

He climbed and searched where Lyle could be. Then he heard a loud sound from the direction of the wall.

"The, the wall was destroyed!?"

Luka was surprised. He understood that if the wall was destroyed, the monsters would surge in. However, the situation was strange.

The adults were cheering.

When he looked carefully, he found Lyle's figure.

The eyesight of Luka who was a son of a hunter was good. He could see the scene clearly.

Lyle’s safe figure—and then the griffon that was lying unmoving on the ground nearby.

Luka became happy and waved his hand energetically.

"Lyle-sama won! He took revenge for dad! Ooooii!"

He raised his voice from extreme happiness. Luka continued to wave his hand toward Lyle—.

Chapter 76 – Regret

Luka who was on a high place far away was waving his hand.

I wanted to complain why he was going outside, but seeing his happy face made me unable to say anything.

Aria-san was smiling.

"Luka-kun, he is really attached to Lyle isn't he?"

"He's a good boy. But, it's dangerous there. We have to tell him to go back. That watchtower is rotten so it's dangerous."

He was far away so I couldn't hear what he was saying. I could see how his whole body was radiating happiness. But, the place he was at was bad.

I was worried that the watchtower would crumble and he would get injured.

"Hey, why are you taking care of that boy?"

Aria-san's frank question made me troubled of how to answer, but I smiled slightly and replied.

"Because he's a relative."

"Eh, is that so?"

"No, I just thought that it'd be great if that's the case."

"What's with that?"

I apologized to the pouting Aria-san while turning my gaze toward Luka. I asked various things to Aria-san, but it seemed the battle was mostly over.

"What's left is only to investigate whether there's any monster remaining inside the town. I'll gather people right away."

It would be dangerous if there was monster remaining inside the town.

"……I'll do the investigation."

"That'll be a great help. Everyone is already at their limit after all."

I knew that just from looking at Aria-san's tired expression. The surrounding was also excited by the victory, but there were also a lot of injured people.

"I'll send other people if I find anything like that. I'm also at my li—"

When I was thinking that it was easy due to the convenient Arts, I found one red dot within the map in my head.

"—E, eh?"

"What's wrong?"

"No, there is one reaction……but this reaction……"

"Is it a small fry? The griffon and hippogriffs are defeated, so it's a relief."

The slowly moving dot was bothering me.

"All the hippogriffs are defeated aren't it?"

"Yes, that's right. Each gate defeated one of them, and Miranda defeated two in total. It seems that Lionel defeated the remaining one inside the town though……somehow it feels unbelievable."

I wondered why that guy was so twisted unlike Luka.

The red dot on the map that I checked was slowly approaching a blue dot.

That place was the watchtower where Luka was at no matter how I considered it—.

I separated myself from Aria-san, then I started running.

"Wait, what’s the matter Lyle!?"

A yell came from the Jewel.

[Lyle! Hurry and save Luka!]

When I thought whose voice it was, it was the Second’s voice.

At the distance I could see the figure of Luka who climbed the watchtower.

Approaching the high place was a griffon with one wing. Even though it was in a terrible state, the hippogriff that showed up in that high ground was directing its gaze toward Luka.

"……Lionel, that guy didn’t finish it off!"

Displeasure toward Lionel was welling up one after another while I was running. My legs wouldn’t move like I wanted them to. My body was terribly heavy.

In a stroke of bad luck, there wasn’t anyone around Luka. There wasn’t anyone who could save him.

"—!"

The worst result flashed in my mind.

The place where Luka was at was also bad. There wasn’t anywhere to escape to above the watchtower. It was too high to jump down from. If he was wounded doing that he wouldn’t be able to move. Even before that—Luka still hadn’t noticed the enemy.

"—Run"

Aria-san ran toward me with a worried look.

"Lyle, really what’s going on!?"

"Run! Luka, run away from there!"

I squeezed out my voice as loud as possible, but Luka couldn’t possibly hear it. Perhaps because he was high spirited, he didn’t notice the hippogriff approaching from behind.

The hippogriff that was slowly approaching Luka was certainly the hippogriff that I fought. Lionel should have finished it off.

It wasn’t a distance that could be closed just by doing my best.

My feet stopped.

It seemed Aria-san also noticed the situation. She looked toward the high ground and her face went pale.

"No way……because, they said all had been defeated."

When Aria-san used her Art to head there, it seemed pain rushed through her body and she crouched down on the spot. The people who noticed the abnormality were gathering.

"Someone hurry to that watchtower! A hippogriff is approaching that kid!"

The soldiers rushed there in panic, but surely they wouldn’t make it in time.

I who understood the situation correctly—understood well that it would be too late at this rate.

My hand reached toward the Jewel in habit—I clenched my hand without grasping it.

I hesitated.

The Second who noticed my feeling called to me. His voice was slightly shaking.

[Lyle—you understand right?]

I clenched my left hand and looked down.

[You, actually can use my Art aren’t you? It’s this range. If it’s with my Art then you’ll absolutely make it in time. Besides, if a weapon appears just like with Oyaji then—]

I felt like tears would spill out.

.

It felt like a long time ago.

The oldest memory I had was around when I was ten years old.

I had the memory of my parents being kind to me, but it was hazy and I couldn’t remember when it was. I had family, I had grandparents—I had vague memory of being cherished.

My clear memory was starting from when I was shut inside my own room.

There was a lot of book inside the room. There was also a warm bed. There was even meal brought to me.

But, no one would involve themselves with me.

I once tried talking to the servant who brought me my meal.

"Tha, thank you."

I said those words thinking that I should try grasping any kind of chance. When I was ten years old, I thought that I was receiving that kind of treatment because I was in the wrong.

The female servant looked down in despise at me who said that.

She kicked the trolley that had the meal placed on it and the food spilled on the corridor.

"—Eh?"

"My apologies. It spilled."

The servant said that and left. After that she didn’t bring me new food.

I wondered whether I had done something wrong.

I was ignored even when I gave greeting. I was glared at when I called out to someone.

Even though the scene of mansion in my memory was warm, the reality was harsh.

I was jealous at Celes—my little sister having meal together with my parents. I desperately pondered of how to insert myself into that circle too. I went out to the garden and swung my sword in order to get recognized.

I also worked hard in practicing magic.

But, no one in the mansion would recognize me.

Even the gardener Zel who saved me didn’t have any contact with me at that time, I also had never met him. But, thinking back it might be Zel who cleaned up the part of the garden that I messed up.

When I returned to my room with a tired body, the servants would gather and talked.

"Aa, Celes-sama is truly precious."

"She is really beautiful. But in exchange of that"

"I wonder why the eldest son is this hopeless. He is a disgrace of Walt House."

They intentionally talked like that when I passed beside them.

I couldn’t stand it.

Even so, one day. If I worked hard then surely. My effort would be rewarded. I continued to believe that.

I was living in a big mansion.

But, I was allowed to only use my room and the garden. In addition, when my family was in the garden I would get told that I was in the way and got forbidden from leaving the room.

Thinking back now I was living in a terribly narrow world.

Sword and magic. And then the books inside the room. My livelihood were revolved only around those things.

Clothes and necessary stuff were prepared for me. Perhaps that was something to be grateful about, but I was envious at Celes who was given dress and various other things from my parents.

How long I continued to struggle in the mansion where no one would look at me? How much did I work hard? However, even such effort was meaningless before Celes.

I was defeated by Celes who was only holding a sword and ended up getting driven out.

My parents didn't look at me from the start.

I ended up getting sick of everything. It felt like everything was pointless……it was at such time.

The annoying them—the ancestors appeared.

I was also happy that Novem would stay at my side. It was also fun traveling with a lot of people.

Honestly, I also didn't hate my interaction with Shannon.

Miranda-san also had a troubling side to her but……she was looking at me. It was embarrassing and I didn't know what to do. But, I didn't hate it.

Quarreling with people was scary and it made me wanted to run away. Was it because I didn't want to be hated?

Even so the problem was the ancestors.

They were really noisy and didn’t have any reservation. Perhaps that was why I was also able to show them my own self without dressing up anything.

If they complained then I’d retort back.

Such relationship was really pleasant for me.

But, when the First vanished.

I realized that this situation—wouldn’t continue forever.

The ancestors would vanish after teaching me their Art.

That’s……too lonely.

.

[Lyle!]

The Second’s voice pulled me back to my senses.

[Listen well. You have the strength to solve this dilemma. I want you to save Luka. Hey, you can do it already right? Until now, you intentionally failed right?]

Slowly, I grasped the Jewel with trembling left hand.

"—Because, that’s just oo lonely. Something like Art is sufficient as it is, rather than that I’m!"

Aria-san wrung out her words in frustration.

"Lyle, sorry. I……can’t go to save him."

……It was impossible for the completely exhausted Aria-san. In fact, she was in anguish since just now because her body couldn’t endure using her Art.

Luka’s smile floated in my mind.

At the same time, the figure of the Second hugging Dewy also came to mind.

[Hey, I’m begging you, Lyle. I—don’t want to see a kid die for the second time. I want that kid to live. It’s my selfishness.]

My body trembled.

The Second let his son who looked similar with Luka to die. I understood how he was regretting that even now.

[I didn’t make it in time. Because I broke my promise my son died. I regretted it all this time even now. Are you going to shoulder the same regret like me?]

When I lifted my face, it was when Luka finally noticed the abnormality.

.

—Luka saw how the soldiers at the wall were saying something toward him.

"……Me?"

When he looked around, he saw a hippogriff that lost a wing and a front leg was dragging its body to approach this watchtower while blood was trickling from its mouth. He didn’t notice before this even though it had approached until this near.

Luka felt scared and fell on his butt on the watchtower.

"Hih!"

The hippogriff was looking pained, even so it gazed at Luka with hatred and put its front leg on the watchtower. The rotten wood easily broke. Luka clung on the tilting watchtower.

The hippogriff was turning its large mouth toward Luka who was sliding down and almost slipped off.

"So, someone……save me, dad!"

He asked for help at his father who had died.

Luka’s crying voice resounded from the high ground—.

.

I could hear Luka’s voice crying for help.

It was the voice of a son asking for help from his father.

[Are you okay with this!? I absolutely can’t forgive this. Absolutely! What need is there in hesitating? You can do this. You can save Luka! That kid is asking for help from you!]

—That’s right. I can do it. I can do it but.

[Stop weighing a dead guy with a living human! We’re already dead. Inside this Jewel is only memory. We’re just something like dregs! That kid has a future. He is still that young. That kid will experience many happy and painful things from here on. He is different from us!]

The Second’s enraged voice changed into a frail one.

[……Hey, Lyle. Please. Grant this selfish wish of mine. I don’t want, to see a kid die anymore. I don’t want to see it.]

Tears overflowed. I couldn’t stop it anymore.

I took off the Jewel in my left hand’s grasp as though to tear it away. Then the chain stretched out straight. It stretched out with the Jewel as the center to left and right—no, to up and down. The metal became liquid and swelled up.

"Wait, Lyle what are you—"

I slowly parted from Aria-san, and then I looked at the shape of the silver weapon in my left hand.

It was a “bow”. A silver bow with a trace of the bow of the Second.

However, it had no string.

The blue light from the Jewel intensified.

The silver bow materialized a bowstring of blue light. When I pinched it with my fingers and pulled, light was produced and created the shape of arrow. At first the shape was vague, but it gradually obtained clear and precise shape.

It was an arrow of light.

"I won’t reach at this distance."

When I muttered that, the bow changed its shape in order to accomplish its master’s objective. The bow became bigger and changed shape into a longbow.

The bow grew to a size that surpassed my height. The arrow also became bigger. I aimed with the arrow that was created from magic light toward the hippogriff at faraway.

The Second’s third stage—the Art’s last stage was Select.

After I fixed my aim at the faraway hippogriff, I was able to see magic circle mark assigned.

"Lyle, are you crying?"

I couldn’t answer Aria-san’s question.

I gritted my teeth.

I could hear the Second’s kind voice.

[Lyle, you’re a kind child. ……Thank you.]

"—!"

My fingers let go. Then, the arrow charged forward in a straight line toward the hippogriff with terrific speed.

Both Luka and the hippogriff didn’t notice it.

The hippogriff opened its mouth largely and waited for Luka to fall from the watchtower. The watchtower was crumbling and Luka could fell down anytime.

After a slight delay, the hippogriff’s head burst open. Even the cloud was broken through and a gaping wide hole was opened from that part in a wide range.

Seeing that Aria-san was,

"—Amazing."

Cheers came from the surrounding.

My hands fell down limply. The bow returned into the Jewel—a necklace. I tightly grasped the Jewel.

……The Second’s presence was vanishing.

I crouched down and clasped the Jewel with both hands and pressed it on my chest.

"I’m……sorry. I’m sorry."

I cried while apologizing. The Second’ kind voice came to me.

.

—Lyle’s anguished apologizing voice could be heard.

"I’m……sorry. I’m sorry."

The Second saw Luka falling from the watchtower on his butt. He was shocked because in front of him the hippogriff’s head was blown away and it collapsed. The surrounding was also relieved that he wasn’t injured.

Seeing that, blue light particles were emitted from the Second’s body while he recalled the scene of that day. That scene overlapped with Lyle and Luka.

He imagined himself being able to come running under the rain before Dewy died.

He called out to the crying Lyle.

[Idiot. It's me who should apologize. Lyle, thank you very much.]

The Third stood up from his chair and extended his hand while watching the Second's vanishing body.

[—Tou-san.]

The Second's body was enveloped in light.

[Even though that Oyaji could remain for several days, this is as far as I can go. Sleigh, I'll leave the rest to you. I'm counting on you guys too. Lyle is……a good kid.]

The Fourth nodded a bit.

[No need to worry. Lyle will be fine.]

The Fifth scratched his head.

[He accomplished griffon subjugation. He's a splendid man of Walt House. ……There is nothing to worry.]

The Sixth was smiling.

[Second—don't worry about the rest. After all, we're staying with him.]

The Seventh looked at the Second's face.

[Being able to face the house head of previous generations like this is also a strange story. But, Lyle is fortunate. After all he is able to learn the true feeling of the First and the Second while he is alive.]

The Second smiled in embarrassment.

[……Then, that's good. Both me and Oyaji were small feudal lord. I was especially plain and didn't leave behind anything

memorable. Even so, I'm happy if Lyle could take in something from us. I wanted, to teach him more things that can be of use.]

The crying voice of Lyle could be heard.

The Second—Crassel looked at Luka's state.

His figure who was saved in a hair's breadth overlapped with Dewy's figure.

[Lyle……you will be fine if it's you. You're even more splendid than me. I'm really glad……to be able to meet you.]

He was able to see the face of his descendant from a distant future.

He was able to see Luka—a kid who looked exactly like his own son getting saved.

Lyle had properly……made his resolve.

The Second was vanishing.

He became particles of blue light, and at the end he left behind his words.

[I'm plain like this till the end. I wish that I could vanish coolly like Oyaji—]

Another one vanished from the room of the round table.

The chair where the Second sat also vanished, and the door behind it also vanished.

A silver bow manifested.

It was floating just like the silver great sword.

Inside the room of the round table, at the spot where the Second was at, a beautiful silver bow appeared—.

.

After the victory.

The whole town was filled with furor.

Alcohol and food were served. The surviving soldiers and knights made merry.

After making speech and proclaiming our victory, I left the venue. Under the cold sky, I looked up to the night sky with a blanket covering my body.

The moon was pretty.

Even though cold was seeping into my body, somewhere inside I felt uncaring.

I climbed on the building's rooftop and spent time alone. The voices of my allies making merry at the party could be heard.

Eva-san was singing her song among the high-spirited voices.

Even though it looked to be really fun, I didn't wish to join in.

On such rooftop, I heard the sound of footsteps going up the ladder.

It was Aria-san.

Her body was bandaged here and there and she got the smell of medicine from her body. That was how much she had worked hard.

Sophia-san apparently fainted and she was sleeping right now. Miranda-san too seemed unable to really move for today.

Novem was treating the wounded. Monica was helping.

Shannon……she was joining the party. That girl was always in freedom.

Clara-san was also helping Novem and also taking care of the paperwork that I asked her to do, so actually I also should work. But, I couldn’t make the motivation to do so.

"You will catch cold if you stay at this kind of place."

Aria-san brought warm soup. She held two cups. It seemed the soup she brought was entered into a canteen.

She poured the soup into the cups and handed one to me.

"Here. It’s hot so be careful."

"……Thank you."

Aria-san who sat beside me also drank the warm soup.

When I took a sip, it felt like warmth was seeping into my cold body.

"I don’t know what happened but, what’s the matter with you today? You suddenly cried and collapsed in the middle so I was worried."

After that. After saving Luka, I was carried up by Aria-san.

She must be worried because my condition was strange.

I felt like I had done something bad.

"Well, it was because of various things……really, thank you so much for today. It was a great help."

"If you don’t want to say then it’s also fine. Both Novem and Miranda also doesn’t look like they really want to press the question so I also won’t ask."

It would take a bit of time to explain what happened. For me right now that was tiresome.

"Those two mentioned something like that?"

"Yeah. Eva seems like she wanted to ask various things but, Novem warned her, telling her to endure. While Sophia is in that condition so she might not even know. She was reeling on her feet, so I wiped her body and let her sleep. Come to think of it, Sophia’s breast is getting—"

Aria-san continued searching for topic to somehow keep the talk going and she talked about Sophia-san. But even if she told a man like me how her breasts was getting bigger or how when she carried her that big breasts were—I could only smile wryly hearing those.

Perhaps Aria-san herself thought that it was bad. Her face was red and she averted her gaze shamefully.

"So, sorry. I unconsciously get into my usual mood."

Was that the mood between fellow women?

Thinking of that, Aria-san too had really become like a female adventurer. I didn’t know whether it was a good thing, but she had become reliable.

I looked up to the moon.

Come to think of it, after the First vanished I was also looking up to the moon with Aria-san like this.

At that time I said something and got slapped, by the reason of that was still a mystery.

It seemed the ancestors knew the reason, but they wouldn’t tell me.

Let’s try to ask someone about it after this.

"……Somehow you seem sad. You don’t look happy even though you’ve defeated a griffon."

"I’m thinking that the price for it is big."

"It’s impossible to do it without any damage. A knight who fought together with me told me, that it’s a miracle we win against griffon with this number."

It was a miracle with trick and preparation behind it.

From my point of view it was a fight that could be won. But the Second was lost from such fight.

……Actually I should finish my farewell with him properly.

I was unable to see the Second’s face at the end.

I also had the feeling of wanting to resent someone.

But, who should I resent? Lionel who was unable to finish off the hippogriff? Monica who left her post? Or perhaps Luka who went outside?

I was also at the same boat when it came to not finishing off the hippogriff.

Monica changed her priority because she sensed danger to me. The result of that was Luka rushing out of the evacuation site, but it was no use even if I blamed that.

Should I blame Luka? But the Second wouldn’t wish for something like that.

In the end, there wouldn’t be any problem if I properly learned Art from the Second and had a proper farewell with him.

It was my bad for postponing the farewell so simple-mindedly.

While I was looking down and thinking, there was a sound of a cup falling.

When I noticed Aria-san was leaning her head on my shoulder while sleeping soundly. She must be tired.

I put a blanket on Aria-san and then carried her on my back.

"……Aria-san, she is warm."

I felt the warmth on my back while going down from the rooftop. I brought Aria-san to where everyone was in order to let her sleep.

.

—The next day.

It was decided to let Lyle rest. Clara and Novem became in charge of paying the reward.

Shannon who was brought along as lie detector was grumbling complains since the morning.

"I’m tired. I don’t want to work anymore."

Clara soothed down Shannon with a troubled look.

Even if she called it work she only needed to check if a soldier was lying or not. Besides, the defeated monster’s number had been reported so they already got the main gist.

They had grasped how many monsters were defeated in which battlefield.

"It’ll be just a little bit more so let’s work hard. Besides, if the reward payment is finished then a break time is waiting for us."

Shannon was sitting on a chair with her chin placed on the table. Her legs were swinging back and fro.

"Because, everyone is only thinking of how many gold coins they can get. Just listening to them is tedious already. ‘I’ve defeated ten monsters~’, there are only people saying that kind of things."

People who gave honest report were in the rare side.

There were also people who subtly add more to their report, that kind was troublesome too.

Anyway, it wasn’t a really interesting work.

Novem was doing her work indifferently.

"This is also work. When this is over there’ll also be snacks that Monica-san prepared. You’ll be able to eat them together with Luka-kun."

When the name of Luka who was like her little brother came out, Shannon changed her attitude slightly.

"That’s right. I’ve got to boast at Luka how hard I’ve worked."

Clara was relieved seeing the motivated Shannon.

"You’re right. Let’s work a bit more in order to that too. Well, the last one might be the most troublesome though."

The work that was continuing since early in the morning would soon be over already at the afternoon.

But, the last one was problematic.

Novem’s expression was different from usual. No emotion could be read at all from her face. The cause of that also lied in the other party.

Clara looked at the paperwork.

(Lionel Walt—he is a distant relative of Lyle-san. Well, at this level it'll be alright even if they're called stranger though.)

Lionel's problem was also related to his relationship with Lyle, but the biggest factor was regarding the hippogriff.

The person reported that he defeated a hippogriff, but in reality the hippogriff was still alive and it ended up creating a trouble.

In the end Lyle was the one to deal the finishing blow, so it was normal to not pay Lionel any reward.

However, the person himself wouldn't accept that.

Lionel entered the room.

He looked vaguely restless.

"You must be Lionel-san. Please sit down."

Lionel obediently sat down just like Novem told him.

(Perhaps it will end without any problem like this?)

Clara thought that, but as expected it seemed that it wouldn't go like she wanted it.

Novem told expressionlessly.

"Due to your help with the work and then your participation in the battle, your reward is one gold coin."

"No way! I defeated a hippogriff. My reward should be fifty gold coins!"

"……You deserted in the face of the enemy didn't you? Besides, you didn't finish off the hippogriff. Because of that a citizen was harmed."

"Tha, that was because the hippogriff got up. It didn’t move anymore when I checked. Besides, that citizen went out on his own right? Obviously it was his own fault for getting injured."

"Is that so. Then, you won’t be given the reward due to deserting in the face of the enemy. It was a compassion to even pay for your work, but it seems you won’t understand it."

Lionel’s gaze wandered around. It seemed that he himself was feeling guilty.

And then when Clara thought he was going to apologize—.

"Ple, please. Give me fifty gold coins. Most of the equipments I borrowed are lost. I also lost a lot of my friends. I’ll get laughed at if I return like this."

"That’s your own problem."

It was rare that the usually kind Novem was being this cold.

(Novem-san, does she hate Lionel-san? Well, I can somehow understand why though.)

He had been picking up quarrel a lot with Lyle since the start. He also said unreasonable complaints. For Novem he must be someone she couldn’t forgive.

"I, it’s fine even if you count the money as debt. If I become the viscount house’s heir, I’ll return it double later. That’s why, I want you to make it so that the achievement of defeating the hippogriff belong to me."

Novem was about to say something, but Shannon addressed Lionel.

"You’re……pitiful."

"Wha-! What, what do you want to say huh?"

Lionel was getting slightly flustered from being sympathized by the younger Shannon. Shannon’s eyes were faintly shining gold.

"You aren’t going to return the money anyway even if you become the heir, but even if you have the achievement it’ll still be meaningless. Because, Otou-sama won’t make you into his heir."

Lionel stood up forcefully. Because of that his chair fell back.

"Li, lies. Viscount-sama is putting his expectation on me. That was what he told me."

Shannon was really feeling pity.

"Even Onee-sama said that’s absolutely not the case. It’s better to just give up. It will be for your own sake to not get involved with Otou-sama."

"Hah! You’re just trying to trick me by saying that. I know it. You all are trying to make Lyle inherit CIrcry House by doing this. I’m not going to get tricked."

"Eh? Lyle won’t inherit anything. Because he isn’t interested. We stopped by at Centralle was also to search for our next destination."

Lionel’s face turned pale drastically. He looked down and muttered "Ahahaha, so he really isn’t interested as I thought".

Clara raised her guard seeing Lionel like that.

He looked like he was going to explode anytime.

Shannon continued.

"You know, Onee-sama told me, your house’s status is too low to succeed our house. If it’s Doris-oneesan who marry into your house then it might be okay, but the reverse won’t happen. That’s why, if it’s just marrying Doris-oneesama then—"

There was hierarchy even between nobles.

Lionel was barely a noble at the lowest ranking in Bahnseim Kingdom. As expected it was an impossible story for him to be accepted as heir of a viscount house.

"—Then, why was I told to participate in this kind of subjugation force. Obviously it's because they're holding expectation for me isn't it?"

When Shannon fell silent with a troubled look, Novem took over the talk.

"You still don't get it. We are abandoned by the palace. It's the same with you when you were sent here. You were discarded by Ralph Circry."

Lionel's fist was making groaning sound.

"Your reward is one gold coin."

When Novem placed a gold coin on the table, Lionel tried to say something but he swallowed his word. And then, he grabbed the gold coin and immediately rushed out of the room.

What did he want to say?

Shannon tilted her head.

"He had a really complicated feeling there. I wonder why."

Novem wrote in the paperwork that the reward had been paid while explaining to Shannon.

"It's pride. He wanted to push away the reward from Lyle-sama. But, he knows that if he don't have money it will be hard for him. He was unable to make the choice of not accepting it. Also……well, Shannon-chan's sympathy was the cause."

"Wh, why is that!? I was thinking for that guy's sake! Besides, if he want to marry with Doris-oneesama, it's fine even if he doesn't marry into our house, that's all I wanted to tell him!"

Shannon thought that Lionel was really in love with Doris. She had a naïve thinking that even though Lionel had no money, he could earn money if he became adventurer like Lyle.

(……Shannon-chan is really pure. I think that he don’t have that much resolve though.)

Clara too was finally able to understand from Novem’s explanation, so she couldn’t laugh at Shannon.

(I’m really estranged from the subtleties of people. Even so, I never imagined that I would get dragged into an incident this big right after leaving Arumsaas.)

Clara also returned to her work.

Shannon’s role was over, so she left the room while still wasn’t feeling convinced.

Clara talked to Novem.

"……Does Novem-san hate Lionel-san?"

"It’s a little bit different from hate. Perhaps it’s regret? I’m sorry. I’m also a little bit confused of how to say it……please forget it."

It was a complex reply to come from Novem. And then, it seemed she had no intention of speaking more than that and wouldn’t open her mouth—.

Chapter 77 – Farewell

—The threat of monster had left the town.

The tidying up began from the next day.

They took out the magic stone from the defeated monsters and burned the corpses outside the town.

The funeral of their death allies was also waiting.

Aria was watching such work while expressing her feeling.

"It’s lonely to be buried here even though their birthplace is at the capital."

Many of the dead soldiers were buried at Gioni. Even if they carried the corpses to the capital, it was unknown if there would be anyone who received them.

Miranda was knowledgeable about the situation in the capital.

"Even burying corpse will take money after all. Even after we bring them there with great pain, I believe that there will be house that refuse to receive the corpse, so it’ll be better to bury them here."

Aria and others didn’t have the leeway to deal with this in case-by-case basis. That was why, the corpses were getting buried here—in Gioni.

"I’m saying that’s lonely. Because aren’t they family? Even if there is a grave for them in an unknown land, no one will be able to come to visit it."

"……Aria is really kind. But you see, that’s how it is."

There must also be family that wanted to accept the corpse, but they had no leeway to confirm it.

The best they could do was only delivering the articles of the deceased.

Seeing Aria looking dissatisfied, Miranda was,

"If it’s here they’ll be able to sleep as the heroes who protected the town."

"……That’s true but"

The two who were really exhausted from the battle yesterday were unable to help with the work. As expected even Miranda was tired. Aria too was only watching the work.

Aria looked around.

"What about everyone else?"

Miranda was chuckling.

"If it’s Shannon and Novem then they’re looking after Norma. You know, she has to prepare the written report so they’re checking her work."

Norma was promised that the achievement this time would belong to her.

"Sophia is still sleeping, and Monica is still working……what are Clara and Eva doing?"

"If it’s those two they’re together with Lyle."

"Is that so."

The two of them were watching over the work—.

.

—The inn.

"Why are you appearing at the north gate when you should be giving instruction at the center!?"

Novem criticized with a slightly loud voice. Norma’s eyes were tearful.

"Be, because, I was wondering if my role was a bit too inconspicuous."

"You’ll be evaluated with your active role as the commander. And yet you’re making this kind of inconsistent report. Its truth will be doubted!"

Norma was facing the table, while Novem was instructing her like a school teacher or a private tutor. Shannon was also beside them.

"You’re an idiot aren’t you? At first you even tried to report that all the hippogriffs were defeated by you."

"I, I’m not an idiot! Now listen, my success is hanging on this report!"

In order to convey how important her role was, Norma prepared a written report that stole the achievement of other people.

She gave the appropriate instructions from the center while also playing active role at all the four gates! The hippogriffs were all defeated by her along with a hundred other monsters in addition. That was what she wrote.

…….No matter who read it they would only think of it as a lie.

"Protecting the city as the commander and also defeating one hippogriff are already great enough achievement. You should hand over the other achievements to your subordinates."

Novem too at first was asking her to correct the report by saying"That’s a bit" or"Writing it a bit like this will be" with a kind tone. But, Norma who was feeling good from achieving the griffon subjugation completely ignored Novem’s opinion.

Novem was exasperated by that and as the result……Norma was looking tearful.

"……Becaues, if I write my role to be bigger then I might become able to be promoted as one thousand-knight leader."

Norma was having the delusion of skipping past being a hundred-knight leader and getting promoted straight into a thousand-knight leader.

Novem glared.

"If you wish to play an active role at the frontline then ten-man knight leader or a hundred-man knight leader will be suitable. You have to learn that for a thousand-man knight leader their job is to consolidate their subordinates and make them raise achievements."

"If I do something like that then I'll be unable to get promotion forever just like Morris."

"……If you don't obey, then we'll spread out the truth. Are you alright with getting doubted and losing the achievement that you obtained with great pain?"

Norma tried to talk back at Novem's threat, but she shut her mouth seeing Shannon smirking.

Shannon was a daughter of a viscount. Furthermore, she was a daughter of Circry House. It was a house that possessed authority……she was someone that she ought to behave modestly against.

"If you don't obey then I'll tattle at Onee-sama."

"Ple, please wait. I'll do as you say. So I'm begging you please don't get angry!"

Norma reluctantly rewrote her report.

"Damn it……why is a daughter of a famous noble is in this kind of place."

Novem too finally felt relieved that Norma was rewriting her report, but she immediately became expressionless and took away the report.

In it, it was written that she was giving command at the center while taking a bit of active role at the frontline. It was better than before, but she didn’t understand at all the meaning of what she was told.

Novem started to rip apart the report to pieces.

"Rewrite it again."

"No wayyyy!"

Seeing the crying Norma, Shannon was,

"This woman is really an idiot."

Saying that in astonishment—.

.

The bow training ground that was created in the town.

It was decided that this training ground that was built in a hurry would be dismantled with the fight over.

I was watching over Luka’s bow practice before we left.

Clara-san and Eva-san were beside me.

Seeing Luka’s bow handling, Eva-san gave him various advices.

"It seems he know the basic, so he’ll be fine like this I think."

If it was Eva-san who was more knowledgeable in handling bow than me, surely she wouldn’t teach anything wrong. I was able to watch with a peace of mind.

"Onee-san, thank you."

When Luka said his gratitude, Eva-san looked happy.

"What a good boy. Here, try this."

Luka pulled the bowstring and fired the training arrow.

I was talking with Clara-san.

Clara-san was making a complicated face at my question.

"The moon is pretty, is it?"

"Yes, when I said that I got the reply that she don’t mind even if she die."

"……Lyle-san, you often read book aren’t you?"

"Well, I guess."

Clara-san’s face turned into a really conflicted expression, and then she took off her glasses and taught me the answer while looking embarrassed.

"It means “I love you”. You were alone just with her, and then based from your story the atmosphere was also like that. Aria-san replying that she doesn’t mind even if she die meant that she was saying “I love you too”."

"……Eh? But, I said that because the moon is pretty when I looked up!"

"I guess that’s how it is for Lyle-san. But, Aria-san is unexpectedly a maiden. It’s not strange even if she know that indirect expression. And yet, if she is replied with words like it’s no good if she really died……. I can only say that it’s good you were forgiven with just something like a slap."

While I was dumbfounded, Clara-san was making a face that said "I don’t understand why you’re looking that surprised".

"It’s strange! How can such meaning exist!?"

"I’m troubled even if you ask me that. It’s an expression that has existed since a long time ago. Well, there’re various theories about its origin, but it’s not clear which theory is the correct one. It’s a famous story that is really old."

……Just who in the world thought it up? But more importantly, what kind of face I should make from here on when interacting with Aria-san?

While I was being unable to accept the situation, Eva-san who overheard the conversation joined in.

"Oh, isn’t it a lovely story? Even so, Lyle’s knowledge is really unbalanced. Even though yesterday you were that amazing, you’re completely like a different person after hearing the story just now. Well, it’s good that there is such gap. I love something like an unknown side of a hero!"

Was I becoming a greatly knowledgeable character who could win a battle of this scale at my young age inside Eva-san?

I wouldn’t say that it was everything, but most of it wasn’t because of my own thinking. I couldn’t tell her that though.

"Even so Clara, you’re uncouth aren’t you? Things like theory or origin isn’t necessary for this kind of thing. It’s fine as long as the feeling of I love you is conveyed to the other party."

Clara-san made a slightly irritated face.

"……It’s not a bad thing to want to know more."

"It’s not bad, true. It’s just uncouth. It’s fine if everything is thinking like that isn’t it? What’s important is its meaning of I love you."

It seemed there was a difference with the two's way of thinking. Clara-san who loved book and Eva-san who loved story. Even though I thought that they would be able to get along.

For some reason they began to argue.

"Information should be conveyed accurately. It's not about being uncouth or not."

"It's something unrelated to the audience, it's fine as long as the meaning is conveyed. Besides, that kind of story is boring isn't it?"

"As expected elf is no good. You tend to exaggerate in your story and song, you'll even make alteration. I hate that."

"We're only making it so the story can be conveyed easier with more excitement! If anyone is curious then they can investigate it by themselves as they please. Rather than accuracy, excitement is more important!"

……It seemed their affinity was bad.

When I tried to stop them, Luka who was in the middle of practice hit the target with his arrow.

Because it made a pleasant sound, us three turned our gaze there. The argument also stopped so I was relieved.

"I did it! I hit! Lyle-sama, I hit the target!"

"You did amazing. Great job."

"Ehehe"

I stroked the head of the delighted Luka.

Eva-san also looked happy.

"You've a good sense. If it's like this, I'll teach you even more things."

"Yes!"

Eva-san was kind at the obedient Luka.

Shannon came at that time bringing sweets.

"Geh! There're three more people here other than Luka."

Sweets and drinks were put inside a basket. No matter how I looked at it, it was the share for several people.

"Ah, Shannon-sama!"

Seeing Luka happy, Shannon came this way reluctantly.

"Even though I thought I'll be able to eat this with only two people if there is only Luka here."

This girl, it seemed she planned to eat sweets for five people with only two people.

.

Night.

I called Eva-san in order to make a request.

The location was inside Porter. Novem was also present.

When I said the content of the request, Eva-san made a really displeased face.

"……You're telling me to tell what happened here to my fellow elves? By that, you mean that I have to tell other elves the new material that is only known by me aren't you?"

A new material for elf was the same like a source of income.

When exhibiting song or story, a lot of people would want to listen just by adding the label that it was new. To say nothing of how the capital would surely be excited by the case this time. ……It would be troubling if we didn't have them to be excited.

Eva-san's reaction was bad at my request.

"Can't you do something about it? Look, the story that is spread out will be the surface story, while Eva-san will be the only one to know the truth."

"My feeling is reluctant. Even if I know the truth I'll be forbidden to speak it, so there is only demerit for me in this."

A fresh topic that she actually experienced herself.

It must not be amusing for Eva-san that she had to teach it to other elves in traveling performer troupe.

It was the false story that would be spread out. It would become a story of Norma-san playing a big role as the commander, even so it was about a griffon subjugation that hadn't happened for a long time.

If we returned to the capital surely the place would be roused up.

Perhaps Eva-san herself might even rose in fame, and yet I’m telling her to teach it around to her fellow performers, so certainly it was a terrible talk for her.

"I understand, I’ll prepare fifty gold coins. No, how about a hundred gold coins?"

When I talked about money, Eva-san showed a slight reaction but…….

"Do, don’t consider me as cheap. If I obtain fame with this material and become a popular performer, I’ll show you that I can obtain that much right away. I’ll grasp fame with my own strength."

……I failed in my persuasion.

My shoulders dropped in dejection. Then Novem took my place and started negotiating.

"Eva-san."

"I won’t do it even if it’s Novem’s request. The reason I worked hard is in order to turn this achievement into a song. My bad but I absolutely won’t do it."

Novem nodded several times at Eva-san’s strong rejection.

"Of course you will. For an elf being able to monopolize a topic that no other know about will give you a feeling of superiority after all."

"That’s right. That’s why, sorry for this."

"But—after you perform the song about this once in the capital, I think that your fellow elves and other performers will immediately learn about it."

Eva-san went "Uh!". Her expression was of someone who got stabbed at where it was hurt.

"Bu, but, even after they heard it once or twice, they won’t be able to win against me who had actually experienced it personally. The amount of information in our possession is different. It’s the amount of information!"

"Of course. If it’s Eva-san then you’ll immediately become famous."

"Tha, thank you."

"—And then I think it’s unfortunate."

"Eh?"

"Eva-san also know that this subjugation force is a sacrificial pawn of the palace aren’t you?"

The subjugation force was originally assumed that it would perish here.

But such subjugation force actually raised a great achievement. If they returned to the capital then the palace wouldn’t be amused.

"We will return and Eva-san will sing about our achievement. The palace won’t be amused and seal your mouth. Or perhaps, they will slander Eva-san as liar spreading false story."

……Would they go that far? No, surely they would.

If it was Ralph who sent us here to die then it wouldn’t be strange even if he did that.

"Bu, but, we really did achieve all that. I think that even the palace won’t have any choice but to recognize it."

"They might insist that we have done some kind of fraud. There isn’t any certainty, and Eva-san who popularize our achievement might become in danger."

If Novem’s talk was concluded, she meant to say that even if we returned after subjugating a griffon, there was a possibility that the palace would find fault with us and slandered us.

For example, they might say that we did terrible thing at a village in the middle of our march. They would spread that kind of rumor and cancelled the promotion and reward. Depending on the situation there was even the possibility of us getting set up as criminal.

"And so, it will be better to spread the truth—the surface truth beforehand so that when we arrive at the capital they’ll become unable to do anything."

In the first place, the real reason why we wanted to spread rumor was this.

We could also spread the rumor at the village or town that we stopped by at while going back, but the speed would be different compared to Eva-san spreading the story to her fellow elves.

The speed of the story spreading would be at different level.

That was why I requested her but…….

"Novem, is it alright to say that much?"

At first the most I wanted to do was only asking for Eva-san’s cooperation if possible.

"She has gotten dragged this deep, so I wish to help out Eva-san."

Eva-san held her head in front of us looking terribly worried.

"Da, danger to my life. But, this is a fresh material that only known by me. Something like teaching it to my fellow elves……but, with my life in danger"

She was conflicted.

From my standpoint, one’s own life would be more important compared to any kind of story material, but Eva-san—for an elf it seemed to be a problem that worth to be worried about.

"……I understand. I’ll teach my fellow elves and ask them to spread it. But, it will take some time."

Eva-san gave up and prioritized her own life. Novem nodded to her.

"Yes. Also, there’s no problem with the time. After all we intend to lend some help with the town and the surrounding area’s repair for a while."

If we didn’t help with the recovery until a certain degree, the town would be in danger again.

It wasn’t just monster, in this world there was also wicked bandit.

At the very least we had to make them be able to protect themselves.

I didn’t want any result that left a bad taste in my mouth, and it was also a request from the Second.

.

—Several days after the battle was over.

The subjugation force was helping with the recovery of the town in addition with the burial and the clean up.

Morris exited the town and observed the state of the fields. He was helping with the repair of the devastated fields and houses.

"It’ll be faster to rebuild with the destruction this bad."

Hearing Morris’s words, the old couples who were the owner shook their head. Behind them were two small children.

"We want to do that but, we have no leeway for that. It'll be enough if you can just make the house livable."

The children's parents died and so there wasn't any worker.

Morris didn't know what to say to them.

"We'll do the best that we can."

He said that and instructed his subordinates.

Then, a participant of the subjugation force who wasn't from knight lineage raised his hand.

"Err, I'm from a carpenter family so I think I'll be able to manage something if I just have the tools."

Morris was surprised.

"Really?"

"Yes. If I can borrow the tools that were used for the work, I'll be able to fix the house to be livable somehow."

When the carpenter's son said that, the surrounding looked relieved.

And then one more person—a middle aged man raised his hand.

"……I'll do something about the field."

"Can you do it?"

"I ran away from countryside and came to the capital. I had been living in the slum all this time but……"

It seemed the middle aged man who was thin and wearing ragged clothes participated in this subjugation force to change his life.

(These people were decided to be members in my group without consulting me when composing the group but, could it be

they were added as my subordinates knowing this? If that’s the case, then Lyle-kun is really tactful at that young age.)

Lyle was also the one giving instruction regarding the assistance of subjugation force in the recovery work.

Morris thought that it was helpful there were people with the capability or the knowledge to do the work, but he also noticed that they were placed here by Lyle who understood from the start the skill of each person.

(He is far more reliable than the like of me. Perhaps a hero is someone like Lyle-kun.)

Morris felt ashamed that he thought of Lyle as someone still young with little experience—.

.

While the recovery work was progressing.

I was holding a report with one hand.

I was teaching Luka how to use hatchet on a high ground.

I watched how Luka was doing while hearing the report from Clara-san.

"There are ten people who decide to stay behind in the town. Patto-san is happy and grateful because the number of male help in this town has decreased."

It would be troubling if the number of man was few, so Patto-san would surely accept the immigration happily.

Even so, I never thought that there would be people who decided not to return to the capital and lived here instead.

"On the contrary there’re around twenty people who want to got the capital and will come along with us."

I was surprised and almost burst out. When I thought that our number would decrease by ten, another twenty joined up, what's with that?

"Why?"

"It seems they lost their house and field. After that, there are also a lot of young people who want to try going to the capital."

"They should just live in their birthplace. I've bought food and raw material from the surrounding village and town. They can just go independent and help out here."

Clara-san was making a complicated expression.

"Lyle-san who is going that far is strange when thinking from common sense. In the first place, I think normally anyone would return right away after subjugating the griffon."

It seemed that I was strange for helping with the recovery and also taking care of various other things after that.

Certainly, this wasn't my own territory.

Spending effort and a lot of money like this would look stupid from other people's perspective.

I returned my gaze to Luka. He was swinging hatchet and training hard.

—In the first place, the reason I was going this far was because of the Second's request.

And then if I raised one more reason, it was because of Luka.

Certainly he was an existence that was like a cute little brother, but even more than that the possibility of him being a descendant of Walt House was high.

"The Sixth had caused trouble after all. There're people who'll be annoying if I don't work a bit harder."

Clara-san tilted her head in puzzlement when I grumbled.

"What’s the matter?"

"Actually it’s because a relative was causing trouble in this area. It’s something that happened a long time ago, but this is like atonement for that relative."

"A relative causing trouble? Is that so."

Clara-san’s expression was lacking that I didn’t understand whether she was convinced or not.

Luka looked up at my face from below.

"Lyle-sama, have you ever come to this town before?"

"Never. But, my relative once came here. It seems that various things really happened at that time."

"Then, there is a granny who is really well-informed. How about asking her?"

I got a bit curious and decided to listen to that granny’s story.

I wouldn’t be able to understand the truth no matter what just from the Sixth’s story. It would be interesting too to listen to the story of this well-informed granny.

.

The granny at the evacuation shelter was drinking plain hot water.

When I came together with Luka and said that I want to ask about past story, she readily accepted if it was only that much.

However…….

"……About Luka’s ancestor you said?"

The face of the gentle looking granny suddenly changed into an annoyed expression when she listened to the subject that I wanted to ask.

Luka tilted his head. I became a little bit scared to ask.

"Ye, yes, that’s right. I wonder that perhaps, his ancestor was someone who came from other place."

The granny dropped her gaze to the cup she was holding.

"……I too didn’t see or hear it directly. It’s a story that I only heard later. It’s a story from when I was still young and this place wasn’t a town but a small village."

An unpleasant atmosphere was also drifting inside the Jewel.

[……Eh, isn’t the atmosphere bad?]

[It’s not certain that it’s a story of the Sixth but……]

[Somehow I want to hear it, but I also don’t want to hear it……]

[……It’s still not decided that it’s a story about me.]

[It’s unsightly that you say so.]

—The voices were minus one. Another voice had vanished.

"This kid’s family was a family of hunter from that time. One day, a youngster who seemed to have high status stopped by here. The one taking care of him was a single daughter of that hunter family."

The Second recognized it.

[Ah, that was me.]

……So it was you as expected huh.

"He was a big man and looked strong. He was a fierce warrior who exterminated a monster that troubled the village by himself. He

was living in the village without the villagers being able to speak strongly to him."

The Seventh talked with a rough voice from irritation.

[Oh, it seems that person was really a bother.]

"But, the daughter fell in love with him. She soon was pregnant with a child. The child was a boy so the daughter's parents were also really happy. A young man like you might not really understand the circumstance but, sometimes the injection of new blood from outside is also a good thing for the village. The village also didn't say anything about it."

Certainly it was something that I didn't really understand. Was the Third knowledgeable about this? It felt like the Second would be knowledgeable about this kind of circumstance.

"However, the young man immediately left the village after that. It seemed that he left behind some amount of money, but the daughter was really sad."

The Third and the Fourth spoke coldly at the Sixth.

[……The worst.]

[This fiend.]

The Sixth made excuse.

[It won't be strange that even you guys had child in other place! Lyle, listen well. Sometimes when feudal lord like us goes to a village, the village might assign a village girl to us to take care of our need. I'm telling you that I'm not the only one who is bad!]

It only sounded like an excuse.

The Fifth laughed scornfully.

[In that period it was when you ran away from home wasn't it? Then, you were just a stupid son who ran away from home, so there

was no way the village would assign you a village girl to take care of your need. You’re in the wrong.]

The Seventh also jumped on the bandwagon.

[That’s right, you’re in the wrong.]

The granny’s story continued.

"After that, the boy grew up splendidly. But, the daughter who became a mother didn’t marry till the end. She said that it was because that person might return back someday."

At this moment, my evaluation toward the Sixth inside me dropped a lot.

The other ancestors must be the same too.

But, the Sixth alone was,

[……So you were waiting all the time for me, Angie!]

He was feeling moved for some reason, but it was a line that was unthinkable to come from a man who didn’t even go to meet her because he was scared of his wives. This guy is the worst. Apologize to Angie-san.

"I too only heard the story, but that daughter is really pitiful. I want to give my complain to the man who abandoned her."

I was also filled with apologetic feeling. I’m really sorry for my ancestor.

"But—"

"Bu, but?"

I was fearful that there was still more. But then granny said something strange.

"After that the village became really prosperous. For some reason while the boy was alive, it seemed there was aid from

somewhere. The adults who knew the situation at that time shut their mouth and absolutely wouldn’t say what was going on. Because of that even I don’t know what happened. Other people were saying rumor that surely the man was a noble from good place, so he was sending aid to the village."

Someone was sending aid? From the Sixth’s story, he shouldn’t have done anything.

The Fifth also said [I don’t know anything], the Seventh too said [I also don’t know about that]. It also wasn’t the Sixth secretly giving help. The person himself was only showing the reaction of [Eh, there was something like that?].

Luka looked bored. It seemed he didn’t understand the talk.

"Err, is Luka that man’s descendant?"

The granny slowly nodded at my question.

"Yes. I wish that this child will safely grow up and become old like me."

With this it was certain that Luka was a relative.

The ancestors were relieved.

[I’m glad. I’m really glad we asked Lyle to work hard.]

[My conscience feel hurt. Because of a certain someone’s fault.]

[I’m really sorry for what my idiot son did.]

[Don’t suddenly act like a damn father! The Fifth—no, it’s you who is the real fiend!]

[Shut up, this stupid idiot! Taking that attitude even though you were scared by mothers and couldn’t do anything, it’s pathetic. However, I wonder which house sent that aid?]

I asked the granny.

"About the aiding house, is there really no information about it at all?"

The granny shook her head.

"I didn’t hear anything about it. But, the adults were really on their guard. We talked between us that perhaps the condition of receiving the aid was for them to keep the name a secret. Thanks to that the village grew bigger, but now we have to start from zero. More importantly, Luka is looking really sleepy."

When I looked there, Luka was dozing off while standing on his feet.

I couldn’t ask anymore than this, so let’s end this here. Or rather……I wanted to finish with this story already.

But, after hearing the story I was thinking to pour all my strength into this town’s recovery.

.

Eva-san returned two weeks later.

At that time, we were also entering the preparation to leave.

I felt reluctant to leave, but we were also unable to remain here forever.

There was also how our food was about to run out, but more than that the palace would move ahead if we took too much time. We had to return before that.

It seemed that Eva-san also spread the rumor to the surrounding village and town. She said that the circulation would surely reach the capital too before long.

"When we arrive at the capital, there might be a lot of people who know the story already."

In that case the palace also wouldn’t be able to extinguish the flame.

If there were only few people in the know then they would be able to shut them up. In the worse case, they would even consider erasing a small city and its surrounding from the map.

But, they should hesitate if the rumor had spread too widely and the targets that had to be erased were too many.

Around the time when we returned and the rumor had spread in the capital, surely there would be a lot of spectator there.

I listened to the report from Eva-san, then I said my thanks and handed her a bag filled with gold coin.

"Thank you very much. Also, this is the reward."

Eva-san accepted it, but she then looked seriously at my face.

"Err, what is it?"

"Hm~……I’m also considering various things. I’ve thought it too before but, if I’m together with Lyle then perhaps even more interesting things will happen."

"Usually we were ordinary you know?"

"What ordinary?"

She said it like usually we weren’t ordinary. I tried to retort back, but Eva-san said to me.

"Hey, can I travel together with you for a while? I’ll leave the capital too anyway, and it’s also pleasant staying together with Lyle and others. It’s also not boring."

"With us? I don’t really mind but……Novem she, how should I say it"

Novem was strict in the matter of choosing comrade, or rather her standard was different in the first place. She was perfect as a partner, and yet she was problematic only in that.

"It’s fine. I had also told Novem. She said that it’s fine for me to come along if Lyle gives your permission."

"So you’ve finished discussing it with Novem. Got it, I’ll permit it."

I also had to talk with the other members. What would Miranda-san say? More importantly, would Clara-san oppose this?

Various troubles were really increasing when the number of people increased.

But, even such complication felt better for me compared to loneliness.

"Thank you. It’s fine, I’ll be useful. Besides, I’ll sing for everyone anytime. It won’t be free though."

"You’re charging there?"

"Naturally. I won’t sell it cheap. Well, if I’m in the mood then I’ll sing for everyone free of charge."

The boisterous Eva-san temporarily joined our party like this.

.

The day for the subjugation force to leave arrived.

People remaining here, people who conversely departed, there were also the change of people but……how should I say it, the parting was complex.

"I love you, my second home town!"

"Fuh, farewell"

"I’ll come to meet you again, you guys!"

There were a lot of people in high tension who were painful to look at.

This was also one of the reasons we didn’t immediately return to the capital. From the fight with the griffon, a lot of people went through growth. There were also a lot of people who never experienced growth decently until now, so the battle this time became a great experience for them.

Because of that, after a while people who became unable to work due to bad physical state appeared one after another.

They obtained a lot of experience, and so the period of them being in bad shape also became longer, which was bad.

Even the people who were alright collapsed in succession after several days and entered the pre-growth period.

As the result, the course of events moved in the direction of it was better to stay here until the situation calmed down.

The eyes of the allies who became calm after going through the high tension post-growth were just terrible. Their eyes looked like dead fish.

"……Was I also the same like that?"

"Don’t say it! Forget it quickly."

"I’m glad this isn’t my home town."

……I myself was twitching nervously of when I would enter my growth, but it seemed that this time I wouldn’t be in bad shape pre-growth.

My two times growth dealt a deep wound in my heart.

The same thing mustn’t happen ever again. I mustn’t cause them.

When the subjugation force was walking out of the town, the townspeople and the allies who remained behind in the town came to see us off. There were also a lot of people who were watching the high post-growth tensioned group with a complicated expression.

There was a boy crying near me.

He was carrying the bow that I used on his back. A hatchet was dangling on his waist.

"Lyle-sama, you're leaving?"

I was an adventurer. I couldn't stay here forever.

I was reluctant but let's depart.

"I'm an adventurer after all. Luka……become strong so you can at least protect someone."

Shannon who was acting like a big sister toward Luka looked at me with a disgusted face.

"Lyle is saying something that doesn't suit yourself. Luka, you mustn't become like this guy. You understand?"

……Yosh, it's decided that I'd give this girl a finger flick on her forehead later.

"Whether you become a hunter or an adventurer, you should become strong at least. After that—"

I looked at Clara-san.

Her hands were holding picture books and simple books.

"I'll give you these. Please use them to study reading and writing."

Luka's mother looked troubled.

"Err, there is no way we can receive something expensive like—"

Clara-san shook her head.

"We aren’t using this. These are Shannon-san’s old books."

It was a lie. Clara-san prepared these books using her Art.

Luka accepted the books. She looked at the books’ titles and rejoiced.

"I read these books together with Shannon-sama. Novem-sama and Monica-sama also read them for me."

Shannon brushed up her hair.

"Luka, I’ll allow you to call me as Shannon “onee-chan”."

Shannon acted self-importantly. You also had someone else read book for you, so why were you acting more proudly than Luka?

"Yes, Shannon-oneechan!"

Shannon looked happy to be called Onee-chan. After seeing her I,

"Use them to study to read and write. Surely it will be useful."

"……Yes."

Luka looked down.

The time for our departure came. Morris-san mounted his horse and called out to us.

"Lyle-kun, let’s depart soon."

Morris-san then went around calling out to everyone. I saw him off before turning back to Luka.

"Let’s meet again one day."

"Yes!"

Clara-san climbed up on the driver’s seat and turned on the engine. It made a loud sound.

We also climbed in but, the other members were already inside Porter, this was…….

I and Shannon moved to the roof, went outside, and saw the scene of the townspeople waving their hand at us.

Shannon waved around both her hands energetically.

Porter started moving and gradually took distance from the town. Shannon was crying.

"……Are you sad?"

"Shut up. Someone heartless like you won’t understand my feeling!"

"Yes, yes. That’s right. I’m heartless."

It must be painful for Shannon to bid farewell to a little brother that she made for the first time. I too understood her feeling a bit.

"We can meet him again one day."

"I don’t need any poor consolation. Besides, if you leave the country then I’ll also end up leaving the country. I won’t be able to meet Luka like that."

In the future, I would aim toward a foreign country that was called the adventurer capital—Beim. Certainly, the possibility of being able to meet him again was really low.

"There is possibility as long as you’re alive."

Yes, there was possibility as long as we were alive.

Luka continued to wave his hands until he was unable to see us anymore.

Epilogue

—Inside Porter, Aria’s face was white as a sheet.

She was wrapped in a blanket and lied down on a bench.

Even though she was in a normal health until before the departure, her condition suddenly worsened.

At the opposite side Miranda was also similarly suffering with a bad complexion.

"……It’s painful. In addition I feel bad and sluggish."

Miranda’s health also crumbled at the same period.

The speaking voices of Lyle and Shannon came from the ceiling.

Right now she didn’t even have the composure to care about other thing, so she was wrapped in blanket and tried to sleep but…….

"Haa, my stomach is empty. Besides there is nothing to do. Eva-san, please sing something."

"Wait, don’t touch my hair with that dirty hand! Hey! Don’t wipe your hand on my clothes!"

Sophia was noisy since some time ago.

She pulled at Eva’s hair and pestered for song. She said that she was hungry, but she had been continuing to eat snacks since some time ago. She wiped her dirty hands on other people’s clothes.

This action of Sophia normally was absolutely impossible to happen, but she entered the pre-growth’s poor health earlier than Aria and Miranda. And then this morning she recovered.

Sophia right now was in the post-growth state.

Her tension was higher than usual and even though she was normally a serious and diligent person, she became slovenly at this kind of time.

She captured Monica at the morning, made her created something that looked like a robe made from blanket, and wore that.

It was also distinctive of her how she continued to eat something all the time since breakfast.

"H~m, this is troubling. Novem-san and Clara-san are at the driver seat, if it's like this let's ask Monica-san to keep her company."

Monica who was called by name was making a face that looked displeased from the bottom of her heart.

"……I'm busy so please don't make me involved with that."

Monica was angry.

The reason was due to the sweets Sophia ate and the incomprehensible clothes that was unclear whether it was a robe or a blanket that she was wearing.

"She took away the blanket that I prepared for chicken dickwad's sake and even devoured all the sweets that I made in order to satisfy chicken dickwad's stomach, this damn parasite! I'm busy with the preparation of cooking food and sweets at the next break time right now."

(So she didn't make Monica create that clothes, but she stole what Monica was creating. No wonder she's angry.)

Sophia laughed flippantly.

"It's fine isn't it? Lyle-dono also said that I can use this. The blanket will be warm when it's used after getting warmed by my skin."

"Haa? Making chicken dickwad wear the clothes that has been used by you? No way. As soon as I finished preparing, this Monica will prepare a new one."

"Ee~, Lyle-dono too surely will love the warmth of human skin. Ah, I get it. It'll be better for us to warm the blanket together."

"Shut up you blanket woman! Warming chicken dickwad is also my job!"

Eva was exasperated listening to the conversation of the two.

"Is it always like this?"

Aria didn't really want to talk, but because Miranda wasn't saying anything she could only reply.

"Yeah. It's always like this."

"It looks fun with how boisterous they are."

Aria had no composure to perceive the words that were said in exasperation as sarcasm.

"Yes, it's fun. It's always fun, so please let me sleep."

Aria covered her head under her blanket. Seeing that Aria shook her.

"Wait. I'll be troubled if you sleep! Sophia has been pulling at my hair since some time ago!"

This time it seemed Sophia got curious with the ear.

"Elf's ear is long."

"Ouch! Wait, that hurts so don't pull!"

Aria closed her eyes under the blanket.

(Aa……I don't want to do anything.)

Inside the vehicle Sophia caused trouble while Eva and Monica were making ruckus. It was lively—.

.

The subjugation force left the town.

The corpses of hippogriff that were the proof of the subjugation were put on horse cart.

The other monsters were burned with only their magic stone and expensive body parts stripped off.

Only the griffon got its whole corpse stored inside the Seventh's Art—Box.

When we stopped marching and took a somewhat long break, I went outside and surveyed the surrounding.

I caught sight of Lionel muttering to himself in low voice.

"That guy, has he been alone this whole time?"

Shannon beside me spoke with a voice that was slightly filled with pity.

"Lionel's friend told me, it looks like his condition is strange after his growth. Apparently he has been like that all this time."

Even though people normally would be in high tension post-growth, he was grumbling in low voice to himself repeatedly instead with a face as though the world had ended. His friends also thought of his as eerie and took distance from him.

And then, even now he was muttering to himself.

"……Did something happen?"

"U~n, he only got reality taught to him?"

When Shannon said that, voices came from the Jewel.

[Reality is sometimes harsh after all.]

[Shannon might have told him something painful.]

[This girl is even more immature than her appearance after all.]

[However, he’s really a pathetic guy.]

[I agree but, I can’t say that this is a really good trend.]

Would it be alright if I called out to him? However, he hated me so he might got obstinate and wouldn’t listen.

"Shannon, did you say something horrible to him?"

"Eh? Why’s that, I only told him that Otou-sama has no intention of making him the heir. Come to think of it, I also told him that Lyle has no intention of being the heir of a viscount house."

Lionel thought that he would be able to marry into Circry House if he could obtain achievement in the hippogriff subjugation. Surely he would be hurt if he knew that it was a lie.

"Isn’t he hurt because of your fault then?"

"How rude. Because, it’s pitiful that he got tricked like that."

The Fourth listened to my conversation and Shannon and concluded something.

[……Lyle, the cause also lie with you.]

When I grasped the Jewel, the Third taught me.

[It’s humiliating that Lyle who he thought as rival isn’t even interested with the position that he desire. What’s more, Lyle knew about the truth when he wasn’t. In Lionel-kun’s position that’s something that caused his pride to be torn apart.]

……Eh? Was I in the wrong?

Then what should I do?

I thought if perhaps I ought to say something to him, but the Sixth made fun of me by saying [Do you plan to finish him off?] so I stopped.

Sophia-san jumped down from Porter’s back.

It seemed she was pleased with the robe that was made from blanket. She got out in that appearance.

Shannon was,

"Uwaa~, she came out."

Both I and Shannon approached Sophia-san. We had to immediately pushed her back inside Porter.

"Sophia-san, you have to be inside. What are Monica and Eva-san doing?"

Sophia-san smiled.

She embraced my arm with a smile.

"So the two of you are outside~. Lyle-dono is warm. I’m also warm so let’s hug each other."

Just what was she saying outside like this?

"Shannon, we’ll push her back into Porter right away."

"I, I get it."

The two of us forcefully dragged Sophia-san until inside Porter.

"Please wait~. I want to play outside. Monica-san said that she’ll cook outside. It’ll be rude to not snitch some food."

Shannon showed interest at the words snitching food.

"Monica is? It’ll be rude to not quickly snitch those foods. Lyle, let’s go play for a bit."

You didn’t want to play but just want to snitch food.

"Just for a bit okay?"

When I allowed them to go to Monica’s place, they hugged me.

"Hooray~"

"Come on, let’s go quickly Lyle."

While we started walking like that, a space was created on the breast of Sophia-san who was hugging my arm and I could see the inside……this person, she was naked under the blanket.

She was wearing shoes, but she was stark naked underneath.

"Sophia-san!"

"Yes?"

"Wh, why are you, under, underneath!"

"H~m? Aah, you mean this. It’s texture is pleasant so"

I wished she wouldn’t wear baggy clothes because of such reason. I forcefully dragged Sophia-san toward Porter.

"Lyle-dono, what about the food?"

"I’ll bring it to you later so please stay inside. Shannon, you help out too!"

"Why?"

Shannon who didn’t know the state Sophia-san was at tilted her head in puzzlement.

.

—Lionel was sitting during the break while muttering to himself in low voice.

The surrounding was taking distance from him who was acting like that.

"……I was always made fun since I was little. Even though the feudal lord Walt House is a count, the capital noble Walt House is jobless and at the lowest rank that we got laughed at. The branch house is impertinent even though our house is the main house. That’s what my family said so I thought that’s also the case."

The superior branch house, and the main house that didn’t change at all.

They were laughed at by the surrounding.

"Why do I have to go through something like this. Even though my house is the main house. Even though the other side is the branch house……"

Lionel continued to speak out what he was thinking, but there wasn’t anyone to listen to his voice.

"I see. That’s right. Things like main house or branch house are irrelevant. It’s irrelevant. Which one is superior, that’s the only important thing."

Lionel looked down and laughed. His face wasn’t decent.

He hid his face that was dyed with madness and continued talking to himself.

"Then, it’ll be fine if I just become stronger than Lyle. If I do that, I’ll be able to knock around Lyle and make him realize which of us is superior. I’m the superior one. That’s right, it’s obvious that I’m absolutely in the right."

The lowest rank of capital noble.

For Lionel, Lyle……the feudal lord Walt House was a house that ought to be hated.

Although it was mostly unjustified resentment, for the person himself it was something right.

Lyle who was compared with himself was amazing.

While he was living as a hanger-on of a woman with high status in the capital, Lyle was earning a lot of money and being surrounded by beautiful women.

The eldest son of a branch house. An idiot son who was driven out of his house. Lionel lost against someone who he thought to be like that.

He was made to realize that he was overwhelmingly inferior that he went mad.

The answer that he arrived at in his madness was,

"I'll absolutely surpass Lyle. I'll make him realize which one of us is right. If it's in order to do that……I'll do anything."

He would win against Lyle no matter what kind of method he used—.

.

The day when Sophia-san made a ruckus after her growth was coming to an end.

Night. I was lying down inside Porter and sent my consciousness into the Jewel.

The second weapon floating there was shining.

The silver bow that the Second left behind could become both short bow or longbow. It was an excellent weapon that fired arrow of light. And perhaps it had serious personality like the Second, it wouldn't suck all my mana.

It was an obedient weapon that was easy to use.

The silver great sword floating beside it would rampage just from me holding it and took away a lot of my mana.

The two weapons were like total opposite—they were similar with the First and the Second.

And then, that weapon was here showed that the Second was gone from this place.

I was scared to come inside the Jewel since then.

After fighting the griffon, I never came inside the Jewel even once until today.

There was only the Third inside the room of the round table.

He was sitting on his chair while staring at the bow.

[Oh, have you finally made your resolve?]

The Third teased me. It seemed he wasn’t angry.

"……I, don’t know what I should say."

I was reluctant to part with the Second and it resulted in the worst parting. The Second vanished without me being able to face him properly. It made me felt apologetic.

[I don’t know what are you misunderstanding, but I and Tou-san aren’t angry with Lyle. I don’t know about the others but, we were happy.]

"Happy?"

[At the end the Second—Tou-san was able to see Luka-kun getting saved. If Lyle inherited the Art right away, Tou-san would be unable to meet Luka. Thanks to Luka Tou-san could meet Luka, and then he was able to see his life saved. In that moment, perhaps Tou-san saw Dewy-niisan being saved overlapping with that scene. He looked happy.]

It was good based on the outcome. My heart lightened just for a bit hearing the Third saying that.

[Besides there’s no need to weigh your mind with it. We’re memory. The people themselves had died since a long time ago, and our role is in order to teach Lyle our Art. It’s not good to worry about us too much.]

"……I was unable to say farewell properly at the end."

[You regret it? But, Tou-san said his thanks to Lyle. Thank you, he said. He also said that if it’s you Lyle you will be alright.]

I could hear the words that I would be fine if it was me.

I could hear it but……I wanted to properly face the person himself.

"I refused to inherit the Art due to my selfishness, and because of that I was unable to properly say thanks to the Second."

Tears spilled out.

[It’s enough. Lyle’s feeling had been conveyed enough to Tou-san. That’s why, it’s alright.]

The parting with the First was sudden.

The parting with the Second was……I thought that we would be able to be together forever if I failed. But, it didn’t go well…….

[Lyle, remember this. I, we have reason to exist. We intend to accomplish our role.]

"……Yes."

[I don’t mean that we want to part with you quickly. But you see, it’s unnatural for us to stay here forever and getting involved with Lyle’s life.]

Was it an indulgence to want them to watch over me?

[We'll talk to you if we think it's fine to accomplish our role and vanish, and it'll be fine too if Lyle yourself talk to us for that. But, we won't be able to stay at your side forever.]

"……Why?"

[That's what it mean to stand on your own. It's fine even if it's not right away but, it's better if you resolved yourself beforehand. Originally, we're people who won't be able to meet each other.]

The Third smiled when I nodded.

[Good boy. Even so, I hardly recognize you with when we first met. You're still naïve and unreliable but, it's a world of difference compared to the time when we first met.]

He returned to the usual the Third.

"Wa, was I that terrible?"

Certainly it was terrible but, for there to be a world of difference……was I that terrible?

[No, you were completely no good. There was a lot of shocking things even when I'm recalling it right now. Even so, various things happened at the case this time.]

I participated in hippogriff subjugation, but what came out was a griffon. From there I took away the right of command and protected the town……certainly various things happened.

The matter like Luka's circumstance, honestly I thought it would be better to not learn it.

Because the ancestors were resurrected as memory, the truth came to light like this.

"The Sixth's story was really shocking."

[Aa~, that. Lyle ended up cleaning up his mess, or rather atoning for his mistake. Even so, I wonder which house was giving that aid. Was it a vassal doing the tactful thing?]

In the end we couldn’t learn who it was but, it was certainly a curious story.

"Come to think of it, what was the reason for me accepting the request this time?"

[What do you think? Well, you must understand it already.]

Considering what the ancestors were saying, were they meaning to make me aware that I was being surrounded by capable talent like Novem and others?

"It’s to learn just how capable the people around me, is it?"

[It’s not wrong but that’s not really it. Simply speaking, it’s because Lyle and also the girls around you are all capable. We wanted you to know that there are people trying to rise up and also various other kind of people. In fact, there were also a lot of thing that shocked you right?]

Well, I learned that there were various kinds of people.

Starting from Lionel, there was also Norma-san. They surprised me. I wondered, did she want to be promoted to that degree, and so on. Her feeling of wanting to profit in easy way was too strong……yep, it was horrible.

[Lyle is fundamentally capable after all. Because of that you don’t understand the feeling of normal people, and the girls around you are also a bit, you know……]

He spoke as though there was also problem with Novem and others.

[It’s not like we’re telling you to understand other people’s feeling. But, you should be aware that there are various kinds of people.]

"……Yes."

And then, the Thirds said with a wary voice.

[Also about Lionel-kun, he might be slightly dangerous.]

"Lionel?"

[The case this time is too strong of a stimulation for him it seems. It might be better for you to be on your guard against him.]

I nodded at the Third’s advice.

Certainly, Lionel’s condition wasn’t really good.

I asked the last thing.

"Third."

[Hm?]

"The reason why the Third chose sword instead of bow—"

[……There isn’t any deep meaning to it. Just like what I told the Second, it’s not respectable for a noble to keep using bow. Sword or spear is the true weapon of noble! It was an era where a lot more people than now were thinking like that, so I chose to use sword.]

"I, is that so."

[When I grew up, I went around defeating one-horned rabbit. Us three, grandfather, father, and son were really eager to hunt them to extinction. ……It was impossible though.]

I didn’t know what kind of face to make hearing the past of the three one-horned rabbit haters.

[……Dewy-niisan died in front of my eyes. I wanted to become so strong so I could save him. In the end, I too was dragging Nii-san with me all this time.]

The Third stared at the silver bow floating in the room of the round table while expressing his mind.

.

—Sophia was sitting while hugging her knees.

Inside the vehicle Aria and Miranda were lying down with blanket wrapping their body.

She buried her face on her knees and recalled her self yesterday.

"……I'm so ashamed I can't look at Lyle-dono's face."

She moved around with only a piece of robe and nothing else underneath, in addition she was eating a lot for the whole day so her body was heavy.

Shannon was making an exasperated face.

"Didn't you loiter around in just your underwear when you were in my house? What's the reason of you feeling ashamed now?"

Sophia lifted her face.

"That's different from getting seen naked!"

"It's not that different isn't it?"

When the two were arguing, Miranda slowly rose up.

Her complexion was bad like yesterday, but there was no light in her pupils even though her eyes were glassy.

Honestly speaking it was scary.

"……Water."

"Ye, yes, Onee-sama!"

Shannon who was holding a flask reacted to Miranda's words and presented the water.

Miranda took the flask from Shannon and drank the water, then she glared at Sophia with a gloomy atmosphere.

"……I'm in pain so be quiet."

Sophia nodded several times.

"Ye, yes!"

While Miranda was being languid, Lyle came down from the ceiling's hatch.

"As expected there is no need for three people to be on the roof."

Clara and Monica were at the driver seat.

Novem and Eva were acting as lookout on the roof.

Then, Miranda's attitude changed drastically. She was still in a bad shape, but light returned to her eyes. She was giving off a slightly pained atmosphere.

"Lyle, welcome back."

"Miranda-san, you have to sleep. You're still looking sick."

"I'm fine. I'm resting after all. But, this time it's really severe."

Sophia watched Lyle sitting beside Miranda while thinking.

(Even though she should be sick because of the pre-growth, Miranda-san is able to be considerate to Lyle-san like this. It's amazing. ……It's a bit scary though.)

Sophia was honestly impressed at the figure of Miranda enduring her sickness with spirit to talk to Lyle.

When she looked at Shannon, she was relieved because Miranda’s atmosphere had changed.

She accepted the flask and hung it on her neck again.

Lyle was thinking of how to deal with the sick looking Miranda.

"E, err, is there anything I can do?"

"You don’t need to mind me. But, let’s see……perhaps you can give me lap pillow for a bit?"

"If you’re fine with that"

Miranda boldly asked Lyle for a lap pillow. Sophia was surprised.

(A, asking such a bold thing! Wait, Lyle-dono also accept it so easily!)

Lyle was giving lap pillow. Although his face looked a bit embarrassed, he placed his hand on Miranda’s shoulder.

Sophia was staring at that while feeling jealous, but she suddenly noticed that Porter’s speed was decreasing.

"Is it break time?"

Shannon shook her head.

"That’s not it. Because, we’ve only taken a break just now."

Sophia stood up thinking if there was some kind of problem. Eva noticed the abnormality and showed her face from the hatch.

"Hey, why are we stopping?"

Porter had stopped completely.

"I also don’t know. What about the situation outside?"

"I’m asking because there is nothing happening. In that case, is there a problem with Porter itself?"

When Sophia thought to head to the driver seat, Monica came with Clara on her back.

"Clara-san!?"

Sophia was worried. In respond Monica was,

"It’s fine. Her health suddenly turns worse. I judged that it’s the sign of growth just like everyone. She can’t drive like this so I’m thinking if it’ll be better to let her rest."

And then Monica looked at Lyle. She saw Miranda and made a slightly not amused face, but her face immediately smiled.

"Chicken dickwad, this is the situation so please take care of the driving."

"Yeah, got it. Miranda-san, sorry but I’ve to go."

"Ye, yes, that’s alright. If Clara cannot move then it can’t be helped."

Sophia didn’t overlook how Miranda glared at Monica just for a moment. Monica herself turned a triumphant smile toward such Miranda and invited Lyle to the driver seat.

"Chicken dickwad, let’s flirt with the two of us alone there."

"No, I’m not going to do that."

After seeing off the two vanishing into the driver seat, Miranda’s atmosphere worsened again. Sophai immediately sought help from Shannon. But, Shannon pushed the flask on Sophia.

"I, I’ll go to the driver seat too!"

Eva too said "There’s no problem then" and closed the hatch. Sophia ended up being left alone in the place where three people were lying down.

(Wait, someone please save meeeee!)

No one saved such Sophia and she passed an awkward time until the next break time—.

.

The driver seat.

I who took over Porter’s driving listened to Monica and Shannon playing beside me while my hand was holding the Jewel.

"Wait, you untied it too quickly!"

"Fuh, looks like cat’s cradle is too advanced of a game for you little girl. Well, this Monica won’t go easy even at game. I’ll allow myself to lose only against chicken dickwad."

"Isn’t that unfair? Go easy on me too. Come on, one more time."

"I’ll accept your challenges no matter how many times. Now, come at me."

The two of them were playing with string that was created from tied knitting wool.

Around Porter that was slowly moving, there were the subjugation force that was traveling by foot.

I matched the moving speed with them while grasping the Jewel.

One day, would the day come that everyone vanished from inside the Jewel?

Would I be able to have a farewell that I could accept with the five of them?

When I thought that the time of parting would someday came—my heart tightened.

.

To be continued at Sevens 7

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